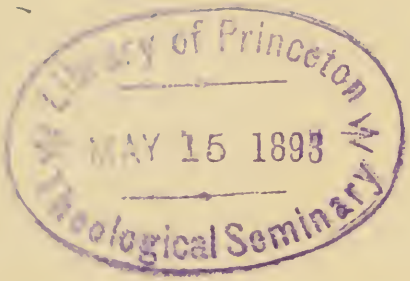

BR 121 .G72 1890
Gray, George Zabriskie, 183
-1889.
The church's certain faith

By the late Dean Gray.

THE CRUSADE OF THE CHILDREN IN THE XIIIth CENTURY. With Illustration and Appendix. 12mo, $1.50.

HUSBAND AND WIFE. With an Introduction by the Rt. Rev. F. D. Huntington. Revised Edition. 16mo, gilt top, $1.00.

THE CHURCH'S CERTAIN FAITH. The Baldwin Lectures, University of Michigan. 12mo, $1.50.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY,
Boston and New York.

Baldwin Lectures, 1889

THE CHURCH'S CERTAIN FAITH

BY

GEORGE ZABRISKIE GRAY

LATE DEAN OF THE EPISCOPAL THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1890

Copyright, 1890,
By KATE FORREST GRAY.

All rights reserved.

The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Company.

NOTE.

In the publication of these Lectures but few words seem necessary beyond my husband's Introductory Letter.

When he wrote this letter, his illness was much more serious than he imagined, and he was suffering from a failure of sight, from which he never sufficiently recovered to be able to revise any of the Lectures. Nevertheless, until within three weeks of his death, he confidently hoped to regain such health and sight as would enable him to prepare them for the press. As now printed, a few changes of form and occasional verbal corrections have been made, but in other respects the Lectures stand as my husband left them.

The fragmentary form of the first Lecture is due to the fact that it was never finished, as is indicated in his letter to the Rector of the Hobart Guild.

KATE FORREST GRAY.

CAMBRIDGE, Easter, 1890.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO THE RECTOR OF THE HOBART GUILD.

CAMBRIDGE, *April* 22, 1889.

MY DEAR DOCTOR, — It is one of the great disappointments of my life, that owing to illness I cannot deliver these Lectures, the preparation of which has been a labor of love; for although I did not expect they would be equal to the occasion, I fully realized the opportunity for good which that occasion affords. But their delivery by me being entirely out of the question, as I both know and am told by physicians, I send them as you request, that they may be read by yourself, or one whom you appoint. Yet, even in so doing, there is the further distress to me, that I have not been able to revise the work of the typewriter, for I feel that there must be many things of greater or less importance which I must leave to your correction, especially in the first Lecture, which has not even received the amount of labor bestowed upon the others, and where I rely upon you, not only to correct, but also to condense, as your judgment and taste will indicate. I know of nothing of moment to change as to matter, but I am aware that there are many things in which criticism will call for change as to form. During the summer I hope to be able to put the Lectures into such shape for printing as may render them a little worthier of their predecessors.

Please state, by way of introduction, that the

brief period allowed for preparation, as well as my imperfect health this last winter, shut me up to a popular rather than an erudite course, which, however, seemed to me, perhaps, to be the means of reaching an audience, whom more elaborate discourses might not help as well, or which, if they would, are so amply provided. As to the subjects chosen, — The Nature of Christianity, the Reality of Jesus, His Deity, His Church, Theology, and the Bible, — they were selected because they cover the ground of the great religious discussions of the day, and because, about all of them, divergences in the religious world are more radical than is generally realized, in spite of frequent apparent agreements. My method of treatment, beyond the popularity of form, has been to try to show how these matters are looked at in consistency with the spirit of our own Church, as it is represented by those who seek to rise above parties and shibboleths, and realize the fullness of her message and the width of her embrace.

In other words, I have tried to present what I have so largely learned from Bishop Harris, for I intended in my Introduction to speak of him as understanding, as fully as any one I have ever known, the words "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," and the Lectures were written with a feeling that they were to be delivered under the sense of the loss of the

> —— "touch of a vanish'd hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still,"

and to constitute an humble contribution towards continuing the influence of his magnificent life.

I have prepared in the rough an Introductory

Lecture upon various preliminary matters, especially the nature of true Christian Belief, as resting not upon mere authority, nor the result of argument, but being the belief of conviction, based upon personal perception of truth. I had hoped to show how, by emphasizing this element, or by "manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," is what is needed in dealing with the alleged prevalent unbelief of the day, in which there is perhaps less unwillingness to believe than desire to believe rightly, and less rejection of the Catholic faith than misapprehension as to what it is.

Let me add, furthermore, that the limitations imposed by the time at my disposal, and by the field in view, have not only led me to say many things which will be trite to many hearers, but have also led me to omit many things which, under other circumstances, would have been called for. Critical listeners will notice not a few significant silences; and I desire to say that inference as to my personal opinions drawn from such silences, will be extremely precarious; for the object of the Lectures is to show the distinction between what the Churchman is committed to, or must hold, and those things which, however firmly convinced of, he is yet aware are matters of private conviction.

With these few prefatory words, I send to you pages which in any event would have been submitted with diffidence to the audience for which they were prepared, but which, in their present condition, are only forwarded because of your urgent request, in view of the importance of making no break in the

series, and in confident reliance upon your kindness and judgment to make such changes and corrections as may be evidently called for. I sincerely hope and pray that in this imperfect form they may contribute something to fulfill the object of the lectureship; and when Providence restores to me my strength, my first labor shall be to put them into such form for publication as may be more efficient to promote the aim of the generous founder whose name the foundation bears, and more worthy of being associated with the work of the Hobart Guild. GEORGE Z. GRAY.

EXTRACT FROM DEED OF FOUNDATION OF THE BALDWIN LECTURES.

"THIS INSTRUMENT, made and executed between Samuel Smith Harris, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Michigan, of the city of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, as party of the first part, and Henry P. Baldwin, Alonzo B. Palmer, Henry A. Hayden, Sidney D. Miller, and Henry P. Baldwin, 2d, of the State of Michigan, Trustees under the trust created by this instrument, as parties of the second part, witnesseth as follows: —

"In the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five, the said party of the first part, moved by the importance of bringing all practicable Christian influence to bear upon the great body of students annually assembled at the University of Michigan, undertook to promote and set in operation a plan of Christian work at said University, and collected contributions for that purpose, of which plan the following outline is here given, that is to say: —

"1. To erect a building or hall near the University in which there should be cheerful parlors, a well-equipped reading-room, and a lecture-room where the lectures hereinafter mentioned might be given.

"2. To endow a lectureship similar to the Bampton Lectureship in England, for the Establishment and Defence of Christian Truth; the lectures on such

foundation to be delivered annually at Ann Arbor by a learned clergyman or other communicant of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to be chosen as hereinafter provided : such lectures to be not less than six nor more than eight in number, and to be published in book form before the income of the fund shall be paid to the lecturer.

"3. To endow two other lectureships, one on Biblical Literature and Learning, and the other on Christian Evidences : the object of such lectureships to be to provide for all the students who may be willing to avail themselves of them a complete course of instructian in sacred learning, and in the philosophy of right thinking and right living, without which no education can justly be considered complete.

"4. To organize a society, to be composed of the students in all classes and departments of the University who may be members of or attached to the Protestant Episcopal Church, of which society the Bishop of the Diocese, the Rector, Wardens, and Vestrymen of St. Andrew's Parish, and all the Professors of the University who are communicants of the Protestant Episcopal Church should be members *ex-officio*, which society should have the care and management of the reading-room and lecture-room of the hall, and of all exercises or employments carried on therein, and should moreover annually elect each of the lecturers hereinbefore mentioned, upon the nomination of the Bishop of the Diocese.

"In pursuance of the said plan, the said society of students and others has been duly organized under the name of the 'Hobart Guild of the University of Michigan;' the hall above mentioned has been

builded, and called 'Hobart Hall;' and Mr. Henry P. Baldwin, of Detroit, Michigan, and Sibyl A. Baldwin, his wife, have given to the said party of the first part the sum of ten thousand dollars for the endowment and support of the lectureship first hereinbefore mentioned.

"Now, therefore, I, the said Samuel Smith Harris, Bishop as aforesaid, do hereby give, grant, and transfer to the said Henry P. Baldwin, Alonzo B. Palmer, Henry A. Hayden, Sidney D. Miller, and Henry P. Baldwin, 2d, Trustees as aforesaid, the said sum of ten thousand dollars, to be invested in good and safe interest-bearing securities, the net income thereof to be paid and applied from time to time as hereinafter provided, the said sum and the income thereof to be held in trust for the following uses: —

"1. The said fund shall be known as the Endowment Fund of the Baldwin Lectures.

"2. There shall be chosen annually by the Hobart Guild of the University of Michigan, upon the nomination of the Bishop of Michigan, a learned clergyman or other communicant of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to deliver at Ann Arbor, and under the auspices of the said Hobart Guild, between the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels and the Feast of St. Thomas, in each year, not less than six nor more than eight lectures, for the Establishment and Defense of Christian Truth; the said lectures to be published in book form by Easter of the following year, and to be entitled 'The Baldwin Lectures;' and there shall be paid to the said lecturer the income of the said endowment fund, upon the delivery of fifty copies of said lectures to the said Trustees or their

successors; the said printed volumes to contain, as an extract from this instrument, or in condensed form, a statement of the object and conditions of this trust."

CONTENTS.

LECTURE I.

What is Belief? 1

LECTURE II.

What is Christianity? 25

LECTURE III.

Was Jesus Christ an Historical Reality? 62

LECTURE IV.

Who was Jesus Christ? 95

LECTURE V.

What did Christ Found? 129

LECTURE VI.

What is Theology? 166

LECTURE VII.

The Bible 196

THE CHURCH'S CERTAIN FAITH.

LECTURE I.

WHAT IS BELIEF?

"By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." — 2 *Cor.* iv. 2.

It should be clearly understood at the outset that these lectures are to be popular. It is an undoubted fact that there is among the laity a demand for a kind of information that is not sufficiently provided. Books and lectures that intend to commend and set forth the faith are apt to be either marked by a scholarship which, while admirable, is not adapted to those unfamiliar with theological study and having little opportunity to become so, or else is unsatisfactory to the intelligent and the thoughtful reader. There is wanted a class of works that will help keen and reflective men and women, without being either technical and erudite, or dogmatic and pedagogical. It is in this line that these lectures are planned, to give to such intelligent and independent minds as those who are addressed, in an ingenuous and sympathetic manner, a statement

of what and why we believe in this Church of our love and our allegiance.

The reason for the selection of the topics chosen for these lectures is that they cover all the ground of controversy — are the great questions in issue in these days when there is so much religious discussion. For this is the characteristic of the mental activity of the age. Some insist that the interest in religion is dying out, and that Christianity does not occupy men's thoughts as it once did. I should say that this was precisely the reverse of the truth. If not a very religious age, it is at any rate more interested in religious questions than any previous age has ever been. Periodicals and newspapers have regular religious departments. The books that sell are those that turn upon such matters. In fact, the writer of fiction who would gain a hearing must have some doctrine to preach, whether old or new ; and "art for art's sake" no longer seems to have any disciples in this department. Clubs are occupied with these themes, and a religious discussion will insure a full meeting. Works on other subjects, on science of all sorts, trench upon the religious domain, and now and then even the mathematician will have his say upon it. It is true that all questions must somewhere trench upon religion, but it has been reserved for our days to see such abounding attention to it. Instead of religious matters being neglected, people will not let them alone who

might sometimes do so to advantage. New *isms* are springing up out of the ferment. St. Paul said that the Athenians were "too religious," but the disputatiousness and fondness for new altars and original cults that we see are probably in excess of what marked their city. And so it is an age full of encouragement to the believer. We can look on and rejoice at all this religious interest, for although much of it is hostile and much is erring, yet it is an immense advance upon the stagnation of a past age. What is wanted is that people should think upon the matters in issue, and even if they think wrongly, at any rate these subjects are before them, and there is assurance of the triumph of the truth, whose greatest enemy is indifference. But beyond this, as we shall see later, much of the discussion is earnest. It is an earnest questioning of received teachings in order to be sure that they are true. That is, this spirit of questioning is often a most sensible thing. To have difficulties of belief is not all a misfortune. Consider the complicated theologies in which most people are brought up, the old theories of Scripture and other things imposed by their churches, the ancestral beliefs handed down by the sects that exist but to perpetuate them, and then answer whether doubt and unrest are altogether to be regretted; whether there is not room for still more critical inquiry into much that in popular religionism passes for Christian truth.

The standpoint whence these topics are to be treated is what I understand to be that of this Church, or that of a strong and uncompromising churchmanship. This is a matter not always understood. It is made often to mean strong emphasizing of some particular features of the Church, rather than others, laying stress upon its institutions rather than its comprehensiveness or catholicity; so changing its conception as to make it a holy narrow Church, with apostolic order and very little room. Let us learn to emphasize both its institutions and its catholicity. Be it our endeavor to set forth the idea of Christian brotherhood as at once containing elements of fixity and elasticity, at once immovably abiding by what is essential to the true discipleship of Christ and also giving free play within it to all the varied sorts and conditions of men and minds. The idea of the Church we assume and would maintain is not that of a vessel moored at both ends and motionless in the ebb and flow of tide, and the change and fall of winds, but it is that of a vessel anchored by that which reaches down to the very rock and grasps it firmly, and yet swings and moves as currents come and go — adapts itself to new conditions of the restless waters about it. In all this I shall try to speak as I believe the noble Bishop would have me speak to whose invitation these lectures are due, and with whose thought I was favored to be intimately acquainted, by conversations whose

memory will ever be among the most treasured recollections of my life. Not only was it his brilliancy of intellect, his soundness of judgment, his masterly ability, his rare culture: it was also his signal apprehension of the true character of the Church, the correct replies to the questions we are to treat, that rendered him, in the estimation of those that knew him, one of the foremost men of our communion, a leader who gave promise of achievements that no one else yet gives.

In taking up our first question, What is belief? it may be well to approach it by considering the state of men's minds on the subject, and certain confusions of thought that are prevalent.

The religious condition of the age is much discussed; and we hear much that is despondent from those that believe, and exultant from those that do not. One's generalizations are apt to be affected by his surroundings, for we are all prone to confine ourselves to our own horizons. It is important neither to exaggerate nor to minimize the spread of unbelief. Let us notice one or two points that can safely be made.

In the first place it is hardly wise to affirm that there is a decline of faith, in the sense of belief in things unseen and forms invisible. On the contrary, there never was so much of it since the world began. Instead of faith wanting, it is wisdom. We see everywhere its exaggerations, in the scenes at Lourdes, in faith cures, in mock sciences based upon it, in *isms* that are enough

to drive sensible people to despair and make the scientific man feel his mission a failure. We sometimes hear of "the Ages of Faith" as departed never to return; some rejoicing, others mourning, that they are vanished. Nevertheless they are coming back in aggravated form, and instead of too little there is too much faith, and not enough reason; and whereas there is a regrettable amount of materialism that is formulated, and more that is practical, yet this is not a danger that threatens us as much as a soul-destroying spiritualism. For it is not true, as some seem to think, that the mere belief that there are unseen realities has a saving or a purifying power.

But how is it as to Christianity? Is not that waning? The really striking fact in the case is the slight degree to which its hold upon human hearts is affected by the changes and the assaults that these times are bringing. There is so much strength in the attacks that are made, so much eloquence, so much that is true even in what the opponents say, so much in the conditions of life to aid their endeavors, that it is a wonder they have not more success than they have. But the numbers of recorded worshipers and communicants are unprecedented, the statistics of expenditure for Christian purposes, of gifts for missions and charities, are beyond all in the past. This is clearly seen also by the perusal of such books as cast light upon the matter in the generations that are gone, the last century and those

preceding. It would seem rash to affirm that at any date there has ever been so large a population in this or any other land professing Christianity as there is to-day; and it is equally verifiable that this increase is greatest among the most intelligent peoples and the most cultured individuals. But to these add those who make no profession, but are living by faith in Christ. It is a great mistake to imagine, as both friends and foes are apt to do, that all Christian belief is included in the church-going part of the community. It ought to be so, but it is not. Outside of the pews there is a vast amount of trust in Christ and of following Him in life, of bearing trial because of the strength He gives and the hopes He awakens, and of doing good and bearing burdens in a spirit learned of Him. The infidel must not sing his song of victory over the decay of Christianity, nor the believer give way to lamentations, until this large element of undemonstrative faith has been added to that which statistics embrace. Then the former may moderate his pæans and the latter his regrets.

But is there no extensive decay of belief in Christ? no giving up the gospel? Yes, there is a sad amount of it; a strange reverting to heathenism is often noticeable. Some people may be shocked by this name for it. But what is heathenism? It is merely living without the gospel, religion without belief in God's answers to a world's needs. If one has given this up, he is a

heathen, be it of the materialistic or more elevated and spiritual kind, and it is difficult to see why he should object to the name that describes him in this respect. And it is very amazing to see men and women in this nineteenth century, who have been blest by Christianity in their homes, their social life, in all that renders their lot different from that of skin-clad ancestors, giving up all that marks them as favored beyond the nations that sit in darkness, and going back to live and educate their children, or trying to do so, in a way that was given up ages ago by their fathers as an intolerable thing, so soon as the light of Jesus came to them. Think of the enormity, the absurdity, of a citizen of a land like this, founded by Christians, made what it is, perhaps more than any other land, by Christianity, becoming a heathen again! But while there is much of this real abandonment of the gospel, there is not so much as some think. The whole question is one of proportion, and while we cannot have statistics of mental conditions, yet all available indicate clearly that there never was so small a proportion of intelligent men and women who really disbelieved the essence of Christianity. The fact is that what unbelief there is now is more outspoken. There is a liberty now to say things once forbidden or discountenanced; and we must be very careful not to conclude that because more people say they give up faith, therefore more have really done so than was the case in other days.

But this leads us to ask what are really the significance and weight of the apparent doubt of the day; for there is much that claims to be, and is, both questioning and denial of Christian beliefs. We may consider this with reference to the matters questioned, or with reference to the spirit of the questioners.

Much that passes for doubt and causes regret is really of no serious consequence, and does not affect essential Christian faith. This is seen when we divide the matters questioned into those for which Christianity is not responsible and those to which it is committed.

Among the former are tenets which are held by this or that sect, or which are widely prevalent without any definite home. The Christian Church, the brotherhood of believers, is not to stand or fall with any of these. We are so surrounded by the atmosphere of sectarianism that it is hard for most people to realize that they can question a great deal that is insisted upon by many people without touching Christianity; that much which is the corner-stone of popular religionism, many points that bodies about us make identical with the gospel, "the mark of a standing or a falling church," are simply the particular notions of individuals or sects, and as much subject to approval or rejection as any other opinion. It were well to do a little more questioning as to the tenets of recent and erratic sects, or even to question the capacity of any

founders of larger and older ones to lay down final tests of correct belief; to criticise keenly any addition to the simplest statement of the gospel. Such things, for instance, as doctrines of predestination, and theories of eternal punishment, and explanatory dogmas about the atonement, and this or that man's assertions about the Bible, are as open to criticism as any teaching of a professor in his chair. The Church of Christ, Christianity, is not committed to any school of opinion upon these subjects, and he who accepts the catholic creeds may doubt all the theories and explanations of them and yet be entitled to every privilege and every hope of the believer. It is time that assailants as well as defenders learned that Christianity is not concerned, its issues are not at stake, its claims are not imperiled, in the attack upon any tenet or belief that is but the shibboleth of some one or more bodies in the land. The overthrow of such things may destroy sects, or cut the ground from under preachers of such ideas; but the gospel is not touched, reasons for believing it are not weakened, the Church's voice is not discredited, until some one point on which the Church is committed in its apostolic faith is overthrown. Learn then not to be anxious about the rejection of, nor to fight for as essential, any article of belief that marks any fragment, or any local or transient organization, of Christendom.

As to doubt upon matters to which Christian-

ity is really committed, to say that there are two different sorts of doubt is not a subtle refining of distinctions, but is only to say what every observer has noticed. Often what is doubted is not the thing itself, but some misapprehension of it. This misapprehension may be due to mistaking the sense of terms or of dogmas because of insufficient information, or because of the way in which they have been interpreted by bodies of Christians or by individuals of influence. This may lead to conceptions of truths that ought to be rejected, out of respect to the faith itself. For instance, when an eminent divine so teaches the doctrine of the Trinity that others could not, and he said he hardly could, distinguish it from the idea of three Gods, the man who knows no better statement of it must deny it; or, when one is taught that the inspiration of the Bible means mechanical dictation to its writers, he may well say that if that is what it actually means he cannot believe it. In either case a man is not doubting anything that Christianity is committed to, but only what ill-advised persons have imputed to it. The true way, then, is for him to ascertain just what the dogma meant to those who framed it, or the word to those who adopted it; what is meant now by the wise and true representatives of the faith; what is intended to be affirmed, and what is not, in the creeds of Christendom. This will put an aspect so entirely different upon the matter, that, it is safe to say, few of the apparent

deniers of the Christian creeds really impugn what the Catholic Church meant to affirm by their most disputed assertions. One of the most difficult things in controversy is to get a plain, clear issue. Too frequently, the assailant and the defender have different things in mind, because of this prevalence of misapprehension, and the cause of truth is imperiled by the defender's accepting the issue as made up by the assailant, and assenting to his definition of a doctrine as the true statement of it: the refutation of which leaves the real question untouched, though it scores an apparent victory for the enemy.

All this might be amplified; but what has been said will suffice to show that actual doubt of the faith is seen to be much less than some suppose, by deducting doubt of matters that any one is at liberty to deny, and criticism of statements that do not correctly express the teaching of the Church or the Bible, and therefore ought to be denied in justice to those teachings themselves. This is the real reason of that calmness with which many regard much of the seeming doubt and much of the active repudiation of so-called orthodoxy, which others, nurtured upon shibboleths and bred in one-sided conceptions, regard as indifference to truth. Such persons know that in many cases that to which Christianity is committed, the actual doctrines of the gospel, are either not doubted or not involved in the issues so hotly discussed. Real unbelief begins,

and only begins, when some positive affirmation, which is truly a part of the faith once delivered, is intelligently and intentionally traversed.

But it is more germane to our object at present to consider the spirit of the questioning. It is true that in many minds it springs from a spirit of unbelief, from a love of destructiveness, or a pride that will not admit any source of wisdom or of help greater than themselves. How much of this there is cannot of course be estimated, but it is rash to say that there is as much as some allege. Much that is attributed to such a spirit is known not to be due to it by those who are acquainted with the facts. They whose doubts are really due to it cannot be argued with: they are to be appealed to, and their heart, their conscience, their religious sense aroused, in order that they may realize that their attitude is wrong and not one in which serious issues can be dealt with. It is useless to argue about religious matters with those who are not in an earnest, religious state of mind. All argument must be confined to those sufficiently awake to the matter to heed what is said and sufficiently aware of their limitations to be willing to be humble and receptive in spirit; and this is the condition of most of those, in all probability, who are questioning the truths of Christianity to-day, at any rate of the candid ones, those whom we meet and whom we know and respect. They form a large class of the community and are more or less outspoken

in their dissent, and we may learn much from them. They are not skeptics in spirit: they are willing to believe what they ought to believe. They only want to be sure that they believe rightly, to have their beliefs accord with their convictions. This is itself a healthy state of mind. Such men by their position teach us the nature of belief, cast light upon what real faith is.

There are two kinds of mental attitude that are called faith, which are widely different, and denote different worlds of experience and life.

One is believing a thing or a proposition because it is told us upon some authority claimed to be adequate for the purpose. This is believing upon authority; and it has been the position generally held in the past and widely urged now, and all that even in some wise and apparently thoughtful minds is meant, and deemed possible, in matters of religion.

The other is the position of many earnest men who conceive that the day for that is gone. It may have been good and necessary once, it may be so for the young and ignorant now, but for thoughtful, inquiring minds it is not satisfactory. They wish to see for themselves, not merely receive reports of what others see, in issues so supremely important as those here at stake. Whether this position is reasonable or not, it is in fact one that is taken by many people, and by most of that class that we want to reach, because they are the influential and moulding minds of

the day in any community. Such people must be dealt with in some way. It is idle to say that they are flippant, or skeptical, or self-sufficient, for it is not of those that we are speaking. On the contrary, they are those who have in them the making of the most valuable and efficient believers.

Again, we are told that to insist upon faith resting on any external authority is making skeptics and infidels by the multitude. They who are not satisfied with the authority will contend that if our faith only rests upon it, then it has no claims on them. Or, others will say that if we have no reason to give for our beliefs, save that others teach them, we give up the case and do not claim that they are true, but only that they are to us sufficiently attested, which is a very different thing, and means that there is no certitude in religious matters, only probability, since all our confidence in authority is only a question of probability.

There must be more than this. There must surely be certitude; assurance must be attainable. The Church must meet this issue, must show that Christian faith can be certain to the man who has it, and so must have some reply to those who say that authority is always open to question. If the statement that two and two make four, or that stealing is wrong, or that there is reward for piety, only rests upon authority of some sort, then either proposition is far from

being a thing above doubt to a candid and thinking man.

An esteemed clergyman was once heard to say that there are so many difficulties about Christianity and so many cogent arguments on either side that he only believed in its doctrines because the Church brought them to him. Of course, this man did not believe them true at all. He accepted them, submitted to the authority that imposed them, would not contradict them; but he could not say that he was sure of them, knew them true. He was through and through a skeptic, without faith. If this really represented his state of mind, (as indeed it did not,) then he was not leaning on the gospel he preached, but on the Church. That is, there is no real belief in such a case. One who believes upon authority believes only the authority. He does not believe the thing itself to be true. The former may be safe, it may be a state of mind fruitful of good results, but it is not faith. Faith means the heart's assent to the truth itself.

True belief is believing for ourselves, seeing for ourselves that a thing is true, assenting to it because we know it to be so, not because others affirm it, whoever they may be. This is assurance, certainty, which we must have to find any help in our faith, any comfort in our trust. It is the faith of conviction as distinct from the faith of assent. It is the only kind that has ever done real work in the world; the kind that has

made martyrs, that has rendered men immovable by temptation, or persecution, or argument. It is the kind that Christ sought to awaken, when He taught the disciples that in Him they might have peace, or when He promised the light of life to those that believe in Him. It was St. Paul's faith when he said: "I know Him whom I have believed," or when he compares his hope to "an anchor which entereth into that within the veil."

But why argue, that the only faith that is actual and really deserves the name, the only one that can be a source of confidence, the only one that should be satisfactory to the Church, the one that should be aimed at, is that which is believing a thing for one's self, accepting any verity because it is seen to be a verity? Because this spirit, which marks the sincere questioning of the day, and is the state of mind of many who hold aloof from the ordinances of Christianity, is one to be encouraged, whose demand is to be met as reasonable and right. Such faith is more than a reasonable faith, which means a faith for which reasons can be given, and which, in reality, is not faith: it is persuasion by urgent considerations. True faith is believing, not because of persuasive arguments, nor because one cannot escape the conclusion, nor because our minds are overpowered by what others adduce, but believing because one sees that the thing believed is true, apart from reasoning, by direct perception which

leaves no doubt. It is like belief in the sunshine, which is a matter, not of reasons for believing it, but of personal, immediate vision. It is being conscious of it, not persuaded that it exists.

This, then, is the kind of faith that we may and should have, that of personal assurance, of immediate conviction. We are entitled to demand that anything we are asked to believe shall be seen to be true, but we are bound to accept what is so seen. That is, when any one asks us to believe a thing, he may be expected to show that we ought to believe it, because it is perceptibly true; and we are bound to do so if it so appears, whether we can explain it or not.

Why are we so bound? Because we have a capacity for religious and moral truth, are not unable to discriminate between it and error, although of course not always with the same certainty. We all claim it, all day long. When a man says I will not believe this, or I maintain that against all argument, what does it mean but that he knows he can tell right from wrong, truth from error? Every revolt against authority, whether justified or not, every positive affirmation, implies it. It is the basis of all argument. When we reason with a man, we know we cannot force him to a conclusion. We try to make him see what we are maintaining, presuming that he can see truth if we can put it rightly. All life and intercourse move on this basis. The only reason for blaming one for anything wrong is

that he could know what is right. We act upon it every day, assume it in our own conduct and in our relations with others. So we claim for ourselves the power to see what is true, and we demand of others that they do so.

Can any one, it is asked, actually discern all truth when presented to him? Is the statement absolute? No, it is, as with anything else, a matter of development and growth. We do not expect a child to see the truth of many a matter that older persons are expected to discern, in morals, or in duty, or in logic. So in the discernment of spiritual things: in measure as one is spiritually alive and mature in intelligence he can see what is error, and what is verity, in things spiritual. We do not expect the gross man whose higher nature is dead or torpid to perceive what others perceive. We do expect those who are developed in that nature to perceive, and follow, and accept truth, in the higher realms. We all agree that this power of perception, or of discrimination, is a thing that can and should be and is progressive in the world and in individuals. It follows that if any one were spiritually perfect, if his eyes were cleansed and his heart purified, he could always discriminate between truth and error; and this is our hope in the life to come, where there will be no delusions because there will be no blinded sight. Not that we can see it except as shown to us. God must always be revealed. No man can by searching

find Him out. But what we do and must expect is that we shall be able to recognize His verities when presented, and to see that what is said to us is true not only because He makes it known, but true of and in itself. So as we advance in spirituality here below we can see more and more by direct vision; can have the faith, not of testimony, but of personal perception. This alone is faith in the truth, as distinct from faith in the witness to it.

Christ always claims this faith, and asserts this capacity in us, as regards His gospel. He does not argue, or give reasons why we should believe what He says. Nor does He impose it upon us to be received simply because He says it. He says over and over again such things as this: "He that is of the truth heareth my voice." He says not, "Ye must believe what I say," but always implies that we ought to believe it because we can see that it is true. He appeals to men, does not use syllogisms nor coercion, simply takes for granted their capacity for immediate perception and conviction, and expects them to exercise it, and to believe and confess that He is "the truth, the way, and the life." So did all the apostles, notably St. Paul. He does not argue for Christ's gospel, though he may reason out its implications and inferences. He simply presents truth and expects it to be received, appeals to the consciences of men to follow what he assumes they can know is to be followed. He

asserts this faith of conviction as distinct from that of authority, as being the only true faith and the one alone worthy of Christians, in such passages as these: "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned;" we endure "as seeing Him who is invisible;" and above all in the precept set forth in our text: "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." This shows the position of an inspired man, which ought to settle the matter for the believer and for the unbeliever, that we are asked to believe only what is shown to be true. This was St. Paul's principle of preaching, not arguing for the truth by processes of logic which may convince the intellect, nor requiring its acceptance because of the overwhelming weight of authority, but simply manifesting, making plain, the truth, and thus expecting that men would accept it because able to recognize it to be true. Thus he preached, and so did the early Church. Those were times when no one cared for his or the Church's authority; just as with Christ, who spoke to those who knew not, or cared not, that He was the Son of God; and in those times the gospel had simply to go upon its own merits, had no power except the power of truth recognizable by men. So has it been ever since. Whatever good has been done by authority, and this good we do not deny, all the real converting work of the Church has been done by making men know and see

the salvation that is in Christ, by presenting the gospel to them; which has awakened that faith that has been immovable by temptation or by trial, because the faith of knowledge, not of testimony. How much more should we expect this to be the case now, when all about us have had their eyes open to visions which the heathen had not, have in some measure the mind of Christ, and so possess a capacity to discern what is binding upon conscience, what is true of God, and of His dealings; which warrants us in expecting their assent to the gospel even more readily than in other days and other lands.

To those who say, as some do, that it is unsafe to leave it to mankind to accept the truth of the gospel as they shall see it true, we answer that it is of the very essence of skepticism to affirm this. Are we not to believe in the power of truth, and of truth in Christ, to carry conviction? We had supposed it was the power of missions and the encouragement of our preaching, that, when properly presented, men would see that Christianity is what they want, what meets their needs, what lays hold of their hearts and claims the assent of their consciences. We had supposed that it was so welcome, so direct a response to the appeals of men, that when concerned in religious matters they who hear would at once say that they knew it true and would cast their all upon it. And so it is. The practice of Christ and of the apostles in their preach-

ing, all the experience of centuries, our own experience, our confidence in the truth of God, agree to repudiate the unbelieving and skeptical affirmation that the gospel of the Son of God needs argument and authority to secure its acceptance. It only needs statement of its glories and precious truths and appeals to conscience, to be accepted. This is the way in which we who believe have been won from our unbelief. This is the way in which those are asked to come to Christ who may not have done so. When and if they care for a gospel from God, they will see that this is it, and that it is real. No man who has known Christ by direct vision and relationship will give Him up. Any man is liable to give Him up who only knows that some one else testifies to Him.

It will be said that this does not produce agreement, and that there will be endless divergence if men are left to their conscience, and if they are urged to believe because and when they see the truth. Has the method of presenting the faith by arguing for it been successful in this respect? No one will maintain that it has. And as to authority, if anything is written large upon the page of history, it is that this has not succeeded in producing agreement. The effort to produce it has resulted in disagreement, and rebellion, and schisms, all through the ages. There has been no more disastrous failure in the past than such an attempt. There is none now. Men will

not submit to dictation when intelligent, or when they do, it is only up to a certain point. But on the other hand there has been agreement on the basis of appealing to the spiritual manhood, the consciences of men. Despite the divisions and antagonisms of the past, it is one of the wonders of religious history that real Christians have been substantially agreed in what their hearts have accepted.

About the essence of Christianity, the nature of Christ, the nature of His work, the agency of the Holy Ghost, the whole creed of Christendom, there has been unity: not because of any authority, since it has been among those often sundered, but because all have seen those things to be true by the eye of their spiritual sense. The history of Christianity is sufficient evidence of the fact that if left to themselves, if properly taught or shown the gospel truth, Christian people would come to agreement in as far as they were willing to follow their lights; and if not an organic unity, at any rate an agreement in belief such as has never yet been effected by any reasoning about doctrines or enforcing them by authority.

. . . . . .

LECTURE II.

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

"I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, . . . and wherein ye stand: by which also ye are saved; . . . For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." — 1 *Cor.* xv. 1–3.

WHAT is Christianity? What is it that is proposed to us by the Church for our acceptance, and the acceptance of which renders us disciples of Jesus? What is it that we have in Him which constitutes Him the Saviour of those that are His people? This is the question to which we now turn.

It may seem a very unnecessary question, and may be met at once with the answer that, of course, every one knows what Christianity is, that there are more unsettled issues that call for our attention. But that is not the case. History shows that there is no question upon which Christians have been more divided than the very fundamental one as to the essential character of what St. Paul terms "the vocation" wherewith they are called; and observation shows that it is the same at present. Not that true believers

vary in their inner life, in the relations of their hearts to the Redeemer; but nevertheless, in theory, they "who profess and call themselves Christians" disagree *ab initio* as to what they would define Christianity to be. This is proven by the divisions that have been so frequent, by the corruptions to which Christendom has been subjected, and by the persecutions that have marked its history. How can all this be accounted for, save by the existence of a radical divergence as to what constitutes the true faith of Christ's holy name? For divergence here affects everything else. They who separate on this issue pursue paths that never come together again. And, on the other hand, all differences among Christians on other matters, all that produces separation and alienation, may be traced back to underlying differences here. This will be seen as we proceed, and it shows how the consideration of this matter must precede those which are to follow. Our conceptions of Christ, the Church, Theology, the Bible, will depend upon our conclusions here, and it is only by a happy inconsistency that one who is astray in this issue can, as undoubtedly many do, hold correct and helpful views upon these subjects.

Many answers are given, more or less explicitly, to our question; but they may all be reduced to three, each of which carries with it weighty consequences, and such as can have no place under its alternatives.

One is that Christianity is a set of laws for life, to be met by submissive obedience. Christ came to be a lawgiver, to guide us into a conduct which will secure the rewards that God has to bestow. This was the tendency of the Christianity of Europe in the early ages, due to the fact that the Church had as its task the reducing to order of barbarous and turbulent peoples. Fortunately, the Church had the power to make itself obeyed by them when it spoke in magisterial tones, and we must see the hand of Providence in its work. But the tendency was worked out very naturally in the practical teaching of Rome, that obedience to Christ, through the Church that represents Him, regard for its rules and canons, is that which constitutes personal piety. But this conception of Christianity is not confined to Rome. It is openly maintained by some who speak of "the religion of Jesus Christ," who mean that His work was to show us the correct laws of life, that He redeems by a faultless guidance.

It is undoubtedly to be admitted, that Jesus gave us laws for life, "leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps;" but this does not define His work in its essentials, nor give us the relation in which the believer is to stand to Him. To say that one's obeying Christ makes him a disciple jars upon the ear that is attuned to the language of the gospel narratives. It is not the attitude that He expects. It is at war

with all that is regenerating and precious in Christianity, reduces it to the level of the world's philosophies and religions, transforms a Friend and a Saviour into a ruler and a pedagogue.

Another definition of Christianity is that it is a series of doctrines to be received, that is, doctrines in the sense of theological propositions. This was the prevailing tendency of the Eastern Church, which regarded Christ chiefly as the revealer of divine truth. But it has been also the prevailing character of Protestantism, which, since its first days, has not actually held to that principle of justification by faith which it has professed to advocate so strenuously. Controversy with Rome and frequent internal dissensions led very naturally to the emphasizing of correct opinion, or precise doctrine; and this resulted in the identification of the gospel with dogmatic statements. This idea has become deeply imbedded in the popular mind, is so generally the conception of the Church's work, that, probably, it would be the answer given, as a matter of course, by the average person to the question, What is Christianity? It is on this basis that Christianity is attacked by most of its assailants. This is the assumption and the strength of agnosticism, which asserts that our doctrines are but speculations concerning abstruse things, and at the most only guesses. This definition may still appear correct to superficial thinkers, and be defended by some who claim to speak for the

faith. It is plausible, and seems to be what the Church has taught us; but all its force is due to a confusion of thought. It involves errors and evils that condemn it as unwarranted, and the vindication of our belief is not to be encumbered with the difficulties that it brings with it.

Unquestionably, correct doctrine is important. Right living must always be connected with right thinking. Furthermore, Christ did give us light upon divine things, which we are to accept. But the statement that Christianity is a set of doctrinal propositions cannot stand for an instant.

In the first place, it also jars upon the ear that is used to the words of Jesus, to the invitations that He made, and the relationship which He sought to create between Himself and men. But, beyond this, it leads logically to the position that to accept these propositions makes one a disciple; or that soundness of belief on deep things constitutes acceptability before God. This has been in fact the result wherever this idea has been held. It led, as we all know, in the Greek Church, to a complete divorce between religion and life, to the substitution of orthodoxy of confession for personal piety; and it has done the same thing very widely in the Protestant world. It is to-day maintained, by implication if not expressly; as, in a Christendom divided by sectarianism it must be: for a sect gives up the reason for its existence if it says that correct opinion

is not supreme in importance. Orthodoxy, or what is regarded as such, is evidently believed to be the crowning virtue, the great criterion of Christianity, by a multitude of our fellow citizens in this land. It has been, and still is, made to do that which only charity should do, "cover a multitude of sins;" and rightly so, if to believe in Christ is to assent to tenets. It also leads to the corollary that the more doctrines a man assents to, the more fully he is a theologian, the more advanced and real a Christian is he. Then, the wise and learned, not the lowly and ignorant, can alone be Christ's ideal followers. Then, the untutored saints, the obscure ones who have known little of such things, are excluded from the crowns to which we had thought them entitled.

The evils that have consistently flowed from this idea of Christianity condemn it. It has been, with perfectly plain warrant, the cause of quarrels and heart burnings and self-righteousness. It has lighted the fires of persecution, and covered fields with blood. The man who holds to it may be shocked by the atrocities of an Alva seeking to reduce the Netherlands to correct belief by the sword, but he has no right to condemn his principle.

So, both these answers to our question are, to one who has "the mind of Christ," condemned by their implications, if not by their very utterance. But they are condemned by another test

which must be final. I dwell upon this, because our fellow religionists are generally astray here, despite their professions to the contrary; and because the amplification of the error may lead to the elucidation of the truth regarding the matter, which to many is really difficult of perception. The effect of religious controversy, most of it entirely unnecessary, has been a great confusion of thought, rendering it to many no easy task to see why we must earnestly repudiate the very idea that Christianity may be defined in either of the ways mentioned; why it is perilous to its essence and its value to use language implying, in any manner, that we regard it as either a code of laws or a system of doctrines.

Any definition of our faith must be such as makes it a gospel. This is what the race calls for, in its sorrows and its sins, and every sympathetic heart longs for it. Some intervention from on high to help them bear their burdens is the one prayer of the children of men. Now, Christianity claims to be such. Christ Himself always so spoke. His work is summed up in that invitation, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." As such it was always presented by His apostles. So to preach it, the Church was founded and commissioned. Furthermore, a gospel must be a power to better men, to transform character. The wish to comfort has been the aim of every benefactor of the race, but none

has succeeded in the effort. The task was ever beyond him. So the endeavor of philosophers has been to find a power that will free men from their sinfulness, deliver them from "the body of this death." They have told of the love of ideal beauty, the enthusiasm of humanity, and the power of habit, but these have all been found vain. After all their eloquence, their listeners have replied that something else was needed to be a good news for those who wanted help to change the downward current of their lives, to enable them to curb their passions or to purify their hearts. If Christianity is a gospel, it must be equal to these demands. But how can it possibly be such under either of the definitions that have been given, and which are so widely held, in fact if not in form? Is it a code of laws? Is Jesus a Saviour in that He is an example? Has He revealed to us only the way that we should walk in? How can that transform us? Then the motive to sway us can only be a spirit of obedience. But that will never change the heart. On the contrary, the heart must first be changed before it can obey. Some motive is demanded adequate to render men willing and able to follow this example. And how can it comfort? It is just the reverse; it is a discouragement. We already know enough of our duty to crush us, and a Christ who merely shows us laws that God would have us obey only adds new burdens. He does not save, but condemns. It were better if

He had never come, than that He should have come but to present perfect ideals to those whose hearts are sad and whose lives are dark because of their conscious inability to realize the imperfect ideals that they have already before them. Or, how is it with the definition that Christianity is but a system of doctrinal statements about things mysterious and divine, given to us by Jesus, as the race's teacher? What has that to do with the change of character? It may arouse the motive to understand them, stimulate mental activity; but how can assent to truths make one better? To suppose that a man's admission that a proposition is true will do him any good is the fallacy at the bottom of persecution, and also of controversial argument. It is a complete *non-sequitur*. He may be convinced by reasoning, or coerced by suffering, and yet be unaffected in his life. And the result is the same when the definition is tested by the fact that the Church's mission is to do what God wills when He says, "Comfort ye my people." How can it do so with such a Christianity? What consolation is there in mere dogmas or doctrines? What peace is found for the tried and the suffering, the weary and the heavy laden, in the possession of mere knowledge? Wherein can they do more than the propositions of philosophy or the teachings of art? How can either conception of our religion give rest? How can we know whether we correctly apprehend the doctrine or suffi-

ciently obey the laws, with which some would identify it? No one can know in either case that he has warrant for feeling "confidence towards God," — whether he is really a Christian or not. Orthodoxy of thought, as well as orthodoxy of life, is ever an uncertain thing; and, if we rely upon it, we must say, as Rome does consistently, that we cannot tell, until the judgment day, whether we can hope for "the rest that remaineth for the people of God," whether we are partakers of "the salvation that is in Christ Jesus." In either case, we are driven to salvation by works, and that means despair; for any thoughtful man sees that he cannot find peace through his own works, save by adopting standards which he knows to be lower than the ideal, when the ideal is alone the true.

What, then, is the definition of Christianity which will render it a gospel? It is that which was universal in Christendom until controversy and corruption blinded the eyes of Christians to the true preciousness of their Saviour; that which, despite all this, has yet been the changeless definition of the Church in its one accepted confession; that which, behind all confusions and perversions of mind, is the conception that strengthens the heart and sways the life of every real believer to-day. It is that we have in Christ a body, not of laws nor of dogmas, but of facts; that the Church is to make known, as received from Him, not merely rules for conduct nor dis-

closures regarding things mysterious and divine, but certain actual transactions, things effected, abiding relationships established, that change the whole character and outlook of life. We need to know God, to have a revelation of Him that is found in no source which is accessible to us here below; to know whether and how we may be spared the consequences of our guilt, and be freed from the anxieties that lie so heavily on the heart of humanity. This race is ever asking: Is there any salvation from the guilt and the mastery of sin? Is there any hope in presence of the all-conquering power of death? Is there any care that watches over us and directs events for good? Has anything been done, is there any provision, for these great wants of a world that only knows its own impotence, and walks through mystery to darker mysteries before it? To such questions, compared to which all others sink into pale insignificance, Christianity is the answer, in the person, the life, the work, the death, the resurrection, the ascension of Jesus Christ; in His gift of the Holy Spirit, in His living, directing presence, unseen yet actual; facts all as real as any facts of history or experience. This is set forth in the ordinance of baptism, wherein Jesus comes to us and we to Him: that God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that in Him are providence, salvation, sanctification, not only disclosed as dispositions of mind, but shown to be operative in actual events, producing new relation-

ships, readjustments, restoration, through the historical occurrences of the career of Jesus. So Christianity comes to us as a series of concrete facts relating to God's dealing with us for our redemption, some having occurred long ago, some present realities to-day, some yet to be realized; all parts of the one great fact of the mediatorial work of Christ.

This is the way in which Jesus Himself preached His gospel, and markedly the manner in which His apostles preached, as seen by the many examples that we have of their mode of presenting their message. They always preached as St. Paul did in our text. He was concerned, in this letter to the Corinthians, with the matter of the resurrection, and instead of any abstract statements simply says that his gospel tidings regarding it was making known certain facts concerning the resurrection of Christ. And what was the Church organized for? Only and solely to do as they did who founded it, proclaim these facts brought about by and included in the work of the Redeemer. Therefore it is consistent that the Church's universal Creed, the one on which Christians are united, the one which alone our historical fold requires for baptism, the so-called Apostles' Creed, should be a statement of them. There is not a law, nor a dogmatic proposition in it: only a list of actual occurrences, past, present, and future, which constitute the salvation of mankind. This is what a creed must always be

for a body that would proclaim the gospel. To introduce doctrinal definitions, or rules for conduct, may be good elsewhere, but they have no place in a statement of what is to be made known in a ministry to the world. And so it must be whenever that work is done. There are bodies that have more or less elaborate confessions to which they exact assent from those who would join them, because they express what their secessions stand for; but, when they would do missionary work, they are compelled to give all these up and preach only the redemptive facts that constitute Christianity; therein coming back to just what their fathers gave up for some temporary theological system, or for the dogmatic inferences of some earnest but unduly confident speculations. Would that none had ever forgotten that the Christian message is simply one of actual transactions in our behalf; and that all had abstained from that tendency to affirm abstract principles, to elaborate all the consequences and implications of gospel details, which has really cursed Christendom, and has been the weakness and injury of a Protestantism that gave greater hopes for the world than have been realized.

In the light of this definition we see what is personal Christianity. It is a resting upon those facts, confidence in their adequacy for our needs, as mortals and as immortals. That is, it is faith. The other conceptions mentioned are met by

intellectual submission, and by obedience; but this is met by trust. Intellectual submission and obedience are not religious acts. They do not make a man pious, though they may render him wise and decent; but faith is a religious, a pious thing, and, as all these facts on which we rest for our salvation are achievements of Christ, Christian piety is after all faith in Him as the sufficient Saviour of men from all their ills and all their perils.

This comforts. The acceptance of, and reposing upon, such verities as those in the creed of Christendom must and does make men strong to overcome the world, hopeful in discouragement, able to confide in God despite conscious sinfulness, and to persevere despite repeated weakness of will; yes, able to lay away their dear ones without despair and to see their own lives ebbing without dismay. It gives peace of mind when we ask whether we are accepted before God. As we have seen, if we are to rely upon holding correct doctrinal opinions, or upon compliance with the laws of God, we can never feel confidence that all is well. But when our discipleship is relying upon these saving facts of God's intervention in Christ, or relying upon Christ's work and Christ's self, then we can feel assurance; since, though a salvation of our own never can, one effected by Him must, be sufficient. A provision for our requirements made by Him must be one that we can trust implicitly.

And Christianity so presented is a power to transform character. Some criticise this conception of it as not providing an energy for that holiness which must be the end and aim of all religion. It is said that this piety of faith will render men indifferent to obedience because they will be led, by consistency, to think it needless. On the contrary, we may affirm that this piety of faith, when real, — and that is what we mean by it, — is the only form that has ever yet made any one holy: that is, made any one do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. They whose piety has been only regard for rules have not been changed in character. Indeed they cannot be, for the character must first be changed, and that calls for some motive that will control the heart sufficiently to make it willing to obey. Whatever may seem to be the case, every true follower of Jesus has been so because to him Christianity was faith, first and foremost; and no other form of it has ever rendered men better, whatever their professions may have been. The reason is that this confidence in Christ renders him who has it lovingly grateful to this Saviour; and grateful love is the strongest motive for good that exists. Man will do more for man under its impulse than under any other; and men have done whatever they have done for Christ because of it. It has made the saints of the Church. St. John said, "We love Him because He first loved us;" and St. Paul, "The love

of Christ [to us] constraineth us." What else, than this grateful love for the redemptive deeds of Jesus has made men and women do and endure what believers have? No amount of doctrinal information given by Jesus, nor of regulations for conduct received from Him, could have moved the hearts that have been moved to that devotion and heroism and obedience in which His disciples have left behind all the zeal and bravery and loyalty of this world.

So do we see the difference between this definition of Christianity and the others, which are both so widely held, sometimes avowedly, sometimes impliedly; and how important it is to avoid all phraseology that gives any impression to the world which we would win, that our faith is identified with either of them. It includes laws for life, of course; it includes doctrines, of course; its object is the regeneration of character, its implication, the knowledge of mysterious things; but it is, in itself, a system or series of redemptive facts which are included in the one great fact of Jesus Christ being the Mediator and Saviour of the world. Apprehend clearly that thus alone can Christianity be what we want and so worth cherishing, a gospel to comfort and transform the weary and the sinful children of men.

We are now in a position to see what is real unbelief, or essential skepticism, as to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not doubting any particular tenet, or rejecting this or that doctrine, or

differing from any authority upon this or that point. To do so may be regrettable, it may be dangerous, it may be wrong, it may be heresy; yet it is not necessarily the denial of Christianity itself. That is denying, or questioning, that Jesus is, or does, what it has claimed that He is and does for man; it is refusing to accept Him and His work as the true relief for human needs; it is saying that this gospel of facts is not true. He who believes these things assents to the Church's message. He who relies upon them is a believer. It is only he who does not this that is a skeptic; only he who controverts these facts is an infidel. This should be urged more and more, and both friends and foes must be made to see that to attack Christianity in its essence they must deal with this issue; that assaulting the Church's message as formulated in her creed is, and nothing else is, assaulting the citadel and dangerous to the Christian position.

And here we see the peril of a new form of unbelief held by many pious and godly men, and by men of great spiritual elevation. They tell us that Christianity can be rendered independent of the historical element in it; that we can and must so present it as to render it a help to men, without requiring belief in events so difficult to verify as the occurrences of centuries ago. Now, there are some who may find light and comfort in the gospel thus conceived of, in thoughts of the love of God and His present care

and the hope of eternal life, without connecting them with actual transactions; but it is because they have been nurtured in the old form of the faith, and know that such precious facts are true because they are displayed in the work of the Saviour. Apart therefrom they are pure speculations, beautiful guesses; perhaps true, but not such actualities as we can rest upon in storms of sorrow or of temptation. None have ever believed in them who have not learned them from the incidents of Christ's work. There is no reason to believe in God's mercy, or a Father's care, or the power of resurrection, or the Spirit's assistance, except as we learn them from Jesus; and they that use these facts for their comfort are, whatever they say, using a light that He kindled when He was on earth, and that has been kindled from no other source. So, beware of this high-minded and plausibly commended attempt to render our faith independent of occurrences in Palestine long ago. It may avert some difficulties, but it creates others that are vastly more serious. It is taking just the same position, only in a far more extreme way, as that assumed by those who tell us that Christianity is a set of theological propositions, and strange to say, it is done by the last men of whom we should expect it, men who have been opponents of dogmatic religion. It is also eviscerating our religion of all that makes it a gospel to our brethren and sisters in this world, who can only find comfort

in real facts that bring to them relief. It is rendering the transforming good news a series of abstract truths, for which we have no sufficient certitude, and which never could affect a character, or touch a heart not already softened. There are, as we shall see, satisfactory proofs of the historical reality of the facts in question, though they happened two thousand years ago; but be this as difficult as it may, it is better to cling to the Christianity of facts than to take up with a form of it which has no certainty, is essential unbelief of what Jesus sent His apostles to proclaim, essential unbelief in Himself, and though it may retain the semblance and much of the value of Christianity in the generation that adopts it, will have neither in the next one, which will consistently follow it out.

But how about the institutions of Christianity, its holy days, its ministry, its ordinances, above all, its sacraments? These things are undoubtedly so prominent in our system that they must be included in any definition of it, and place must be found for their true estimate. Alas! as with so many other things, these externals have been but too generally the subject of mistaken valuation, leading to divisions about matters on which, if anywhere, there should be union and fellowship. We know how they have been exaggerated in their importance, and used for intolerable purposes, for official aggrandizement and spiritual despotism, for the excitement of fanaticism, the

soothing of conscience, the fostering of a formal piety. It is no wonder that there has come at times a reaction against them and a teaching that they are of no real value, not essential to Christianity. This is the tendency in the air to-day. It is called spiritual religion. The minimization of them is considered an advance in real piety. The one thing to be aimed at in growth in grace is to be independent of them. Then comes their neglect, and a reluctance to urge them. It is said to be needless to go to church. Sacramental observance is outgrown, and the organization of the Church regarded as of no importance and of no authority.

But let us not be carried away by any such plausible language, nor intimidated by any abuse of the institutions of our faith, so that we fail to see just what they are worth. If Christianity is a body of facts in the work of Jesus Christ, to be reposed upon in faith for the comforting and the transforming of life, then their office is to increase and to render more controlling that reliance upon Him who, by these facts, has made provision for a world's needs. What is said of the sacraments in the Articles of our Church is true of them all, "By them God doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him." They are not to be used for what might be their function under different conceptions of our relation to Christ; that is, they are not to teach theology, nor to impress lessons of

ethics, as if either of these were His message to mankind. That they have been often so employed, is well known; and the Church has been made to serve exclusively as a school of morals or of doctrine. That such should be the results of its work is true, but such is not its immediate task, which is to increase the faith, to intensify the trust, of the children of men in their Lord and Saviour. This faith produces holier living, more unselfish conduct, and fuller views of truth: things that come in no other way, and cannot by any zeal or any eloquence be produced in human hearts without it.

That these external features have done this work is written in large letters on the page of history. It is they that have handed on from age to age the redemptive achievements of Christ, and deepened that faith which has been the source of the consolation and sanctification of a multitude whom no man can number. Even in their abuse, even when in the hands of unworthy men, they have been "means of grace," the means whereby the gospel has been brought home and rendered a power for good to those whom they have reached. There can be no perpetuation of Christianity without them, nor has piety been sustained in their absence. The result of neglecting, or dispensing with them, has been the fading away of Christian faith and Christian living in the communities or the individuals that have tried it, however high the aims

or devout the motives that prompted them. This is the reason why we insist upon them so strenuously, to the frequent surprise of brethren about us; why we cannot recognize as normal any Christianity that treats ancient ordinances, venerable ways of apostolic precedent, or holy sacraments, as matters of indifference. The whole efficiency of the gospel is bound up with them, and souls will starve without them. At the same time, we must never regard them as valuable save for the one end of promoting faith in Christ and His salvation, of bringing about closer relations with Him; having, indeed, as their objects, purer thinking and more unselfish living, but through the awakening of that grateful love, which faith engenders, and which both opens the eyes to spiritual truth and strengthens the will to the following of Jesus.

If Christianity be what we have said, some important inferences will be seen to follow. One is the way in which it must be preached. If it be a gospel of soul-comforting and soul-redeeming facts, then we are to address men on the basis of their needs, with the feeling that in this world they have great wants for which we have relief to bring them. What people want for real life is real facts, things achieved for them; and a true ministry is to give them those facts as they are found in Christ. It must be the Church's sleepless endeavor to urge these realities upon them as what their experiences call

for; and to show how they satisfy their necessities. Therein lies the attractiveness of Jesus. Some tells us that this consists in the beauty of His character, others in the light He gives to our ignorance, others in His faultless ideals for life. These are all true, but that which attracts men and women to Him, the magnetic power that has drawn the millions to Him, is something else: it is His being that for which in their sadnesses and weaknesses they long, "the light of life;" that for which the saint of old cried out when he said, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Herein lies our warrant for believing in His triumphs. That will receive men's allegiance which helps them. On this basis, nothing but this gospel has any chance of supremacy in coming years. Philosophy cannot expect it. Centuries of effort have only made its insufficiency pitiably evident. Old religions tell of disappointed hopes in many a despairing land. New ones have no charm save for the erratic, no value save to dreamers. The future belongs to Christ, because He has what men want, and they will take it at His hands as soon as they find this out. Consequently each church, each body of Christians, may expect a share in the furthering of that triumph in measure, only as it makes known "the riches of mercy that are in Christ Jesus our Lord," the things done in His gospel for a race that could do nothing for itself. Without this, no prestige of ancient lineage, no pos-

session of venerable claims, no record of other days, no numbers can secure a share. Nothing tells with a needy race but ministering the provision for their needs. To this ministration alone they will gather, as there alone they should.

How then do we explain it that so many do not heed the Church's message? It may be due to an unawakened sense of need. Those whose religious cravings are not alive, or who have been strangers to vicissitude and softening experiences, those who are hardened or frivolous, may not be expected to listen to an offer of redemption. They that are whole, or think themselves so, need not a physician, but they that are sick. In such cases, there need be no surprise at indifference. They must first be made to ask before they can receive, to feel their wants before they can accept an offer of relief. We can only wait hopefully for the Providence of God and for His Spirit, to render such willing to hold out their hands for the bread of life, willing in penitence to cast themselves upon Christ and rest on His salvation.

But this will not account for all cases of indifference, nor for so many as some may say. It were flattering our own souls to assume that, whenever pews are empty or words are vain, the fault is in those who listen, or whom we would reach. There is more seriousness than many a clergyman realizes among men and women with whom he mingles too little. There is much less

rebellion against truth and much less self-sufficiency than are sometimes charged. If one go about among his fellows in a sympathetic and brotherly way, he will find, to his increasing surprise, that many a man, of whom he had not thought it, has sober moments, and soul-hunger for what this world cannot give. The rejection of Christianity by such is due to something else than hardness of heart. There are business men and worldly women who would truthfully repudiate the charge of repelling the will of God, ignoring help and salvation, but who would scorn the narrow ecclesiastic who says that not heeding his words means refusing the light of the gospel. Their condition is like that of the sailors on the vessel that once found its supply of fresh water exhausted, when apparently becalmed on the wide sea. Day after day it drifted, and the agonies of thirst increased. Another vessel hove in sight at length, and the sufferers signaled "Give us water! We are dying of thirst." To their amazement, back came an answering signal, "Dip it up!" Again they made their appeal, and again they read the seemingly mocking response in the flags of the distant bark. At length, one man, thinking it might not have been a mockery, did dip some water from the ocean and found it fresh and sweet. Then they saw that they were in the mouth of the mighty Amazon, and had been for days praying for what was all about them. So are there many in this world

thirsting for refreshment and strength because they have not been made to see that it is all at hand; ignoring the gospel of Christ, not because they are indifferent to it, but because they have not been shown how free it is, and how to draw upon its riches. That is, the unbelief of many can only be the fault of those who are sent to preach the good news. It should solemnize every church and every minister to think that, if some really thirsty soul, some earnest heart, does not rest upon the Saviour's work, it may be only because He has not been properly made known to him. He is a brave man who dares to say, as some seem to say, that the responsibility of men and women for failure to profess acceptance of the Redeemer is to be measured by their indifference to his words. It must rest upon himself, perhaps, as often as upon them. He can only feel, the Church can only feel, readiness to meet the Lord, who will call us all to account, in measure as we have faithfully and plainly set forth the good news of God's salvation in Christ. Where that is done, we can expect that men will accept it as surely as the hungry will accept food.

To these considerations, which show why the indifference of so many does not prove that Christianity is not the true provision for human needs, we must add that there are many that find in it strength and peace who make no profession of it; that there are many more whose lives are brightened by it, whose characters are

purified by it, than those whose names are recorded in our parochial registers, or who seek the advice of clergymen. This may not be as it should be, yet Christ knows of a great multitude who secretly have enshrined Him in their hearts, who furtively rest on the facts that the Church was founded to proclaim.

And this leads us to the definition of Christianity with regard to the religions of the world; a subject in respect to which there is not only much error taught that is due to unbelief, but also much confusion of thought on the part of those who claim to be believers, and who ought to know better. Careless or skeptical thinking leads both to denial of the value of missions and to such views of them as practically surrender the cause and the principle of the gospel.

What are the religions of the world? They vary very much in form, very much in the degree of their elevation or degradation of thought and life, yet they are all expressions of that universal element in the human mind which we call religion, or a sense of dependence upon higher powers. Religion and piety, or holiness, while they ought to be the same, and are so regarded among us, are not the same in fact. Multitudes, indeed most men, look up to a God more or less unknown, and dread Him, without their lives being thereby influenced for good. There is goodness without religion, and religion without goodness, although so divorced neither is what it

should be. The religions of different lands are the local expressions of a sense of dependence; they are reachings out after God, attempts to gain tokens of His disposition, endeavors to secure some response to the anxieties that weigh so heavily upon the hearts of all, wherever their abode. And, back of all is a sense of guilt, or of the deserved displeasure of the deity invoked. This is seen in the universality of sacrifice, and of laborious rites and painful penances, whereby the worshiper seeks to appease the wrath of the deity and avert his punishments. This may not be clearly felt by the offerer, there may be nothing left of it but some ancient custom that once expressed it, yet it is a feature of all the forms of religion in the world. In short, these religions are modes of worship. They are not faiths, as people sometimes call them, when speaking of the faith of Asia or of China. The worshiper has not any faith, does not believe in anything, has not any trust at all. What is wanted and sought after is something to lay hold of and to rely upon, in presence of the sorrows of earth, the reality of sin, the approach of death, the demands of justice. Their whole shape and tone show that, at the best, they are appeals, prayers, supplications, cries to God; and, instead of there being any such thing as the Faith of Heathendom, the earnest heathen would give his all to have faith and gain the peace that it alone can give.

Now, what is Christianity? Is it one of these religions wherein men have formulated their reachings out after God, expressed their speculations and guesses regarding what He is and what lies beyond the grave? Some say that it is such; that it is the highest result of the human search for truth, the flowering of the instinct of religion, the loftiest form of worship, the purest conception of things unseen, due chiefly to the teaching of Jesus. Some tell us He was the man who of all others has seen farthest into the spiritual realm, and so is the leader of the race in its approach to God; but others, more consistently and more plausibly, tell us that He was such a leader for those who live in the lands that have come under His influence, and that Christianity is only a set of speculations that are as human as any others, peculiarly suited to our circumstances. If this is so, missions are of doubtful propriety. Then let each people keep its own religion, for it may be presumed to be most fit for it, as the outcome of its own experiences and aspirations. Though ours be conceded to be best, yet if that is all, we may well shrink from disturbing old ways for its extension, for it might lead to derangements and divisions and even sufferings, which would be too great a price to pay for the mere improvement of that which is good. If each land's religion is its own way of coming to God, then it suits it like a garment, and we should not try to replace

it by our own. It were not worth the while to supplant a Buddha by a Jesus, if each is the teacher for his own people.

But this assumption, that Christianity is that evolution of religious thought and activity with whose results we are favored, can only be made by those who are as ignorant of what it claims to be as of what it is. Christianity does not come to us in the shape of a human aspiration or effort after God, of an attempt to gain relief from Him. Christianity is not what man has taught to man, but what God has done for man in Jesus; and what we mean by accepting it is placing faith in its good news of soul comforting and soul redeeming facts: a gospel from heaven, not an appeal from earth. This is seen not only in its creed, which affirms belief in revealing and saving transactions achieved in our behalf, but also in all its inner life and all its external features. As to its creed, the real believer relies upon it, not as what man has invented in his loftiest religious soarings, but as what the Father of us all has sent to us in Christ, and as what can be leaned upon as no results of human thinking ever can be; for, in presence of eternal and divine facts, the sublimest speculation excels but little in certainty, perhaps not at all, the prattlings of infancy. As to its observances, the keynote of its worship is not, like human worship, supplication and appeal, but it is glad thanksgiving. Its hymns are not like those of the Vedas,

only lofty adoration at the best: they are outpourings of joy for glad tidings from beyond the veil of the unseen. Its central, one obligatory rite, is indeed a sacrifice, but a sacrifice of thanksgiving, a eucharist of gratitude, not an offering to propitiate.

Everything that represents it shows, then, that Christianity is something essentially different from the religions of the world, whether the ancient ones of pagan lands, or the newer ones devised to satisfy the religious instinct in lands we call Christian. It claims to be that for which they ask, the result for which they labor, the response of God to the world's wants, the voice out of the inaccessible world for which human hearts do crave. Instead of being one of them, it is not a religion at all. That is a misnomer: for it is in itself a revelation, in its adherents a faith, or the reverse of a religion. It is not a way to seek to please God, but a gospel from a God who is already pleased, for our comfort and our guidance. Its membership means, not asking, but receiving. Its people's hands are held out to God: yet not to supplicate His mercy, but to take the bounty that His mercy gives.

If it is the diametrical opposite of what has been meant or expressed in the religions of the world, then it is inconsistency for any one who calls himself a Christian, it is infidelity, to class it among them, or in any way to make it different in degree only and not in kind. And we see

a real infidelity in even the frequently heard expression, "the religion of Jesus." Whatever may be intended, that phrase implies, and is often meant to imply, that Christianity is a system of worship which He established and which should supersede all others, as a higher approach to God; that He has taught us, not merely as a man, but even it may be said as the Son of God, how to draw near to our Father in Heaven. This is true undoubtedly, in one sense. In Christianity is the only true and acceptable homage rendered, the only true light possessed. But this is not true as a definition of the mission of Christ and of what He came to found on earth. He did not come to show us how properly to call upon God, nor how to serve Him acceptably. He came to bring God to us, to found a Church, not of those who serve God, but of those who love Him, prompted not by a sense of needs unsatisfied, but by a sense of blessings received. Its piety is the piety of praise, not the piety of supplicating prayer.

Therefore, to him who believes in this gospel there can be no question of the duty to spread it in every land. For it is what the heathen are really praying for, the light that they are crying for who sit in darkness; that for which they plead, out of their lot of suffering, in all the religions of this world. And so, respect for old religious systems, or lofty and generous efforts after new ones, instead of keeping us from urging upon the

heathen our own faith, should do the reverse. The wider the cult, the more numerous its adherents, the greater the appeal that comes to us who have what they all seek in vain. The more venerable the altars, the more hoary the temples, the more ancient the groves, where earth's children worship, the more intense the claim upon us to give them that for which they have so long and so pleadingly waited. And the purer the dreams, the higher the aspirations of a people, the more direct is our duty to tell them of that gospel which can alone give the life and guidance that they crave.

These, then, are the reasons for missions and for their hopefulness. Sometimes they are advocated as the teaching of correcter doctrines or purer ethics; and then they are, naturally, but love's labor lost. The heathen are not hungering for such things. What they want is a power to rise to newness of life, a comfort for life's vicissitudes. They want this more than people here at home. If human needs call for a gospel, there are no such burdens on life here as rest on the life of heathendom. There is more suffering, more weariness, more despair, more degradation among them; and consequently there is more religion, more praying, more self-mortification, more appeals to Heaven, than we see about us in our world. Take to them this Christianity as a gospel of facts regarding what has been done, what is doing, and what is yet to be done by

Christ's work, and it will spread. With increasing rapidity, as the divine plans mature, they will come to this faith which is what they bitterly need. Deserting ancient shrines and immemorial rites, they will fall at the foot of the uplifted cross, the one availing altar ever raised on earth for human atonement.

On the historic plain of Thebes, surrounded by the ruins of palaces and temples, that tell of departed greatness and vanished ambitions, there stands erect the statue of Memnon. It looks, as it has looked for ages, out towards the east whence comes the dawn, and it is said that they who dwell about it have been wont to hear at sunrise a note of music when the first rays of the new day come to bathe those wreck-strewn fields with light and beauty. So it is with the heathen world, the whole world that is yet without the Christ. Surrounded by the ruins of its hopes, saddened by ever present reminders of its failures, the vanity of all endeavors to build for it a city which would give it rest, this race of ours is looking eagerly for a new and better day, looking with intenser yearning as each century comes on. It is a silent world, silent of praise. It has no heart to sing, no hope to tune its voice to joy. But, when the Sun of Righteousness rises upon it, with healing in His rays, then in measure as to it is brought the good news of the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, its silence will give place to song, its despair to expectation; and from a race that,

through its religions and its speculations vainly looked for God, will rise an anthem that will breathe forth the gladness of a heart at rest, of anxieties relieved, and of a hope born to die no more.

Such, then, is our definition of Christianity and its consequences, the definition which the Church itself gives: a gospel of mercy in the person and work of the Son of God. Its life is a life of faith. Its stimulus is grateful love. Its power is that it meets human appeals for help. Its prospect is supremacy, because mankind will surely come to drink of its refreshing waters when 'wearied in the greatness of their way.' Cling to this conception. Let no influences delude you to accept any other, no eloquence confuse your apprehension of it. Your life will be bright, your heart strong, your hope clear, your doubts removed, as day by day you live in the trustful discipleship of the One Saviour of the world.

For there is no other. There are many voices abroad to-day that, perhaps in kindness, claim to preach good news to men, and too often with a zeal and a vigor that might put the Church to the blush. Art with its fair visions of an ideal realm, material progress with its promises of ease, education with its mental pleasures, science with its plans of social improvement, all say, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." But apply the test that St. Martin used in his cell, as the legend tells us, when tempted by a false

Christ. He was wont to pray daily for a vision of the Lord he loved so ardently, and one day there appeared, as he thus prayed, a person of majestic mien, in resplendent attire, girt with a golden girdle and wearing a jeweled crown. "Who art thou?" asked the saint. "I am the Lord whom thou hast asked to see. Behold me and adore," was the reply. Awestruck at the sight, and yet wishing to be sure that his homage would not be misplaced, the saint hesitated. "On thy knees, good Martin, if thou dost believe," said the figure that lighted up his lowly cell. Humbly, yet bravely, this wise man, who knew that pomp and state are not the decisive signs of the Son of God, replied: "Show me thy hands and thy side!" With a cry of rage and dismay the tempter vanished, for it was Lucifer personating the Saviour, who was thus exposed by a test he could not meet.

So, when other claimants come to you for your allegiance, whether prophets of culture, or of learning, or of civilization, of old religions or of ambitious new ones, ask them too: "Show me thy hands and thy side! Show me what you have done, or can do, for us needy children of a dying race." Then will they too be silenced and vanish in defeat. For only where there have been such achievements for mankind, such benefits conferred, as are these redeeming facts which the Church of Christ proclaims, can be given the faith that comforts and transforms. Poor, pitiable,

helpless saviors are they all in presence of Him who came out of the infinite vastnesses to reveal to us our God; who lived to set us "an example that we should follow in His steps"; who died for our redemption on the bitter cross; who rose again to open unto us the gates of the everlasting life; who ascended into heaven where He ever liveth to make intercession for us; who sent the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities; who is with His people unto the end of the world; who will come again to bring about "the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." And this is the gospel which is preached unto you, the only message to this world which can be called good news.

LECTURE III.

WAS JESUS CHRIST AN HISTORICAL REALITY?

"The certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." — *Luke* i. 4.

We have seen that Christianity is in its history, and in its own definition by the universal creeds, a body of facts to be received and relied upon in faith, to the comforting and transforming of life.

But are the facts in question actual? Are not the objections brought by opponents sufficient to warrant hesitation in relying upon things which occurred so long ago? Is there not so much difficulty about this, that we may, at best, only find comfort in the ideas involved, and, as some do and have done, abstain from making all turn upon actual events?

This brings us to the matter of the so-called Evidences of Christianity, which form a vast literature, representing great labor and great learning. But there are some leading disadvantages attaching as a rule to these works. One is that they deal with issues that are not now in controversy. The assaults on our faith vary from age to age, and a defense that is efficient at one time does not meet new foes who attack

at a different point. This is the case with the chief works of the last century, when an antagonism peculiarly active was met by a display of erudition and power such as has had no superior, and was fully adequate at the time. Especially is this the case with that great book, Butler's Analogy. Unanswerable by those to whom it was addressed, it gives little trouble to the unbelief that is most vigorous to-day. Substantially, its position is that there are no difficulties in Christianity which are not also in natural religion. This is true, and it replied effectively to those who once advocated such a religion, or deism, as it was called. But now the trouble is that unbelief admits the analogy, and gives up Christianity and deism as equally unacceptable. There has been a recent attempt to revive this latter in a widely read book, but it is a position that few earnest thinkers will accept, for Butler has forever rendered it untenable, as having all the difficulties of the gospel without its value. So, this line of argument is as apt to make atheists as to make believers, in the present state of the controversy; and, although a book that can never be obsolete on account of its mine of wisdom and its unsurpassed genius, yet as a weapon for our use, Butler's Analogy is not the argument that is needed now.

Another difficulty attaching to the apologetics of the past is that they are too erudite, require too much of either personal learning or accep-

tance of the statements of others, for ordinary use. This marks signally the great work of Paley. It appeals only to scholars. It makes all the argument for Christianity turn upon the genuineness of the New Testament narratives. This argument is, as we believe, good for those who can pursue it, but it requires especial training and opportunity to verify its force. Few clergymen, and still fewer laymen, have the necessary attainments in languages to read, and in history to appreciate, the ancient documents upon which the argument is virtually based, or even the opportunity to see them. Therefore, at the best, we have to come to this, that the proof of the New Testament authenticity rests, for all but a few, upon the statements of other people. This is a strong position, yet it is not always satisfactory to make such important issues turn upon the correctness of the assertions of scholars. It is the same with a stronger argument, the admissions of the enemy. It is a curious and little known fact, that learned unbelievers now generally admit all we claim for the Gospels and for St. Paul's great Epistles. This may save us a retort, and give some of us great confidence; but this also is not satisfactory to many minds. The reply may be made that the New Testament writers either were deceivers or deceived, or that a critical inquirer into the verities of our faith wants more than the admissions of foes or the testimonies of friends. He wants evidence that

he himself can weigh, who is not qualified for a learned and laborious discussion. Therefore we need, and the laity should have, reasons for belief which are more direct and immediate, and that do not turn upon even the authenticity of the New Testament. For, as we shall see when we speak of the Bible, our faith does not rest upon the volume itself, but only upon what it contains. Yet we are so familiar with it, and with the perusal of the Christian facts as therein preserved, that we are apt to imagine that we get the facts only from it, and are entirely dependent upon it. But this is clearly not so. Christianity comes to us especially through the Church, but also in the very life of the world and its literature, and is forced upon our attention apart from any perusal of the Scriptures.

Now, can we construct an argument that every sensible man or woman can follow, without having to know history and peruse ancient manuscripts, or without having to meet, if we argue from the New Testament, the reply that we must first prove it to be trustworthy? We think we can; and each thinking man believes the gospel just because of such arguments, whether it is realized or not. To deny this is like saying that a man cannot be sure of the Declaration of Independence of 1776, without reading the original document; or that one cannot argue for his own birth without showing the registry of its occurrence, or its entry in the family records. Let us seek to construct such an argument.

It seems strange to have to prove that Christianity is true, at this date and in this land; strange that any should question it or deny it. Think what it has done. It has done the work of a gospel. Then it must be true, we should think; for a medicine that heals a disease must be the right one. What we need is a faith that can comfort hearts and redeem character. Wherever that comes from, it is what we want, and we should, we must, and we will accept it. If Christianity is not true, and does not come from God, we must then accept it as from some other source that is found to be kinder than God. Then we must look up to that source, give thanks to it, and pray to it. It may be human or angelic, as we are told; then the man or angel that has given us this gospel is to be our God; since what we mean by God is a being who can and will provide for our needs and relieve our ills. We must, we should, adore and trust the giver of such a real and actual redemption. But this shows how absurd it is to affirm that Christianity is not the gift of God. He that can bestow such a blessing as the gospel has been to man and can respond to our wants so adequately must be one who loves and pities us; and there is no one of whom that can be said but "the Father of Lights," from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift.

But we must come to a closer issue, it is frankly admitted. All turns upon the reality of

Jesus Christ, as a person who lived, taught, suffered, died, and rose again, nearly nineteen hundred years ago. We must meet the challenge to show our reasons for placing our confidence in Him, and the facts that are connected with Him, and that have no reality apart from His own. This is the essence of the controversy, the citadel to be defended. All goes with it. Everything that we call Christian, and that leads us to a different life and a different belief from those of the heathen, stands or falls with it. If it is not provable, our beliefs are dreams at best, our characters are moulded by mere speculations; our homes, our civilization, our ethics, are perhaps more enjoyable than those of China, but no more certainly in accordance with right and truth. If this historical reality is accepted as a rule of life and trust, a man is so far a Christian, whatever else he has given up or rejected. If not, he may be pious and devout, and living on the plane to which Christianity has raised him, but he is not a Christian. That name, so fraught with associations, must not be used save for what it was meant to express, for it is recorded of the disciples of Jesus Christ that they "were called Christians first in Antioch."

One argument for the actuality of the story of Christ is, that it was held and believed by those who lived at the time, as is seen by countless proofs of varied sorts. This is not saying that it is proved by the New Testament, for we

know it apart from any reference to that volume. The New Testament proves it also ; for put it as late as any one may wish, it still shows at least that such was the belief at a time when people could know the truth in the premises. But what is now meant is that other writings, and also many a memorial and relic, show that, within a short period of the alleged date of the career of Jesus, there was a Church that held the same story that we have, and had been founded for the very purpose of spreading it.

But it will be replied, that is going back to antiquity. Give us an argument that we can weigh, something that does not take us so far into the past. What evidence is there now for the historical reality of Jesus Christ?

One is embarrassed by such a request, but not because it is difficult to reply in the sense that some seem to imagine. I once had a similar question put to me that caused a similar embarrassment. It was when visiting the Cathedral of Aix la Chapelle, which was built by Charlemagne, is full of souvenirs of him, contains many relics, and is his tomb. A fellow-citizen joined our party to avail himself of our interpretation of the information of the German sacristan who accompanied us. He was evidently impressed by the succession of memorials of the great emperor, the crown, the bones, the sceptre, the sword, and other objects there preserved, but as evidently puzzled by his lack of historical acquaintance

with the personage referred to. He saw that this was some eminent man of whom he ought to know, but did not. At length, when his curiosity and ignorance had been long reducing him to misery, he came to that slab in the floor which it thrills one to stand on, with its simple inscription, "Carolo Magno." Here our friend, unable to keep silence any longer, began to inquire: "This person lived some time ago, did he not?" I replied in the affirmative. "How long ago? A hundred years?" he asked again. "More than that," I answered, "more than a thousand years ago." With a look of incredulity, which showed that he regarded me as of doubtful veracity, he retorted: "How do you know that anything is true of a man who lived so long ago?" What could I do? Where could I begin? I could only have said, had I time and had he been disposed to listen, "The evidence is all around you, in this church, this town, this nation. All modern Europe proves it." This is just the difficulty that comes up when we would prove the historical reality of Christ. One does not know how to begin, what to point to, out of all about us that shows it. The modern world, the world of to-day, betokens that Jesus actually lived and wrought as we hold. Its civilization, its literature, are full of memorials of His existence; all involve His teaching, and living, and dying, and rising again, centuries ago. There is no such evidence for Charlemagne, or for Cæsar, as there

is for Him, in effects produced or in memorials that remain.

But let us, out of all these, select some palpable facts and features, some of which will have force with one person, some with another, and none of which can be accounted for, save by admitting not only that Jesus was historically real, but that He was what Christians hold Him to be, and what makes them Christians. It is only because they are all such familiar things that their force and bearing are not always felt.

Take, for instance, the religious condition of the world. Note especially our idea of God. We have a common conception of Him, as being good, merciful, personal, directing and caring for the world. This is the idea that is in all minds about us, as to what the term God signifies. Even they who may not concede that He is, concede that, if He is, such is the necessary conception of Him; and the unbelief of many is found to be due to the feeling that, since they do not find any revelation of such a God, we have no revelation at all. So firmly rooted is it that this is the true idea of God, that, if any one, or any religious teacher, should ascribe to Him an action inconsistent therewith, he would be rebuked even by the infidel orator. The basis of his assault upon this or that doctrine which he supposes to be Christian teaching is its alleged conflict with this very postulate, which must be assumed. Now, whence came this idea of God, so

known to be true, and so at the basis of popular thinking, so really at the foundation of all peace and trust, that no one disputes it?

Do you say that man has made it? That it has been evolved out of the higher thinking of our ancestors? Then, why has it not been evolved anywhere else than in Christian lands, where alone it is known? No religions nor philosophies of heathendom ever reached it. The results obtained by human thought, of higher power and longer duration than our own, upon the subject of God, show that man cannot produce this idea of Him. Yet it is in the very air about us, and we know it is the true one: not an idea which is good for us, as another may be good for Asia, but an absolute idea, the only one that is to be tolerated as allowable. Now, how did it come to us? If not conceivable that our mind evolved it, because all the rest of the human race has, in its evolution, reached no such conclusion, then we can only account for it, as Christianity claims, by its having been given to the race by One who did not learn it from the race, even the man Jesus Christ. Think of this, and you will see that it shows that such a thing must have happened as the life and career of Jesus to explain the knowledge that you have of your Heavenly Father.

This is equally true of other beliefs that we possess, such as, for instance, that of personal immortality; or, again, of our standards of right

and wrong. These are our common heritage, the conviction of those who are, as well as of those who are not, Christians ; and they cannot be accounted for, as the peculiar possessions of Christian lands alone, save upon the theory that those lands have received, as others have not, the teachings of one who made them known, as Jesus is alleged to have done.

But this opens up a vast field of argument, even that based upon what has been done by Christianity. This is obviously a subject too great to be more than indicated in a general way ; yet it may be worth while to point out some weighty facts that bear upon our present argument.

Think what it has done for the mental progress of man. As Balzac said, "Every thinking man has to march under the banner of Christ. He alone has consecrated the triumph of mind over matter. He alone has revealed the intermediate world that separates us from God." Consider the literature of Christian lands, so much loftier than that of others ; their art, that is, the only art that has any life in it ; their philosophizing, so free from absurdities that characterize all other thinking. Think of its effects upon science. It is, in fact, the mother of science. There is none where it is unknown. We have to take our conquests of recent date to lands far older in civilization and more gifted by nature with mental endowments. The reason is

that, in the sphere of Christianity alone is there any such consciousness of his own powers and possibilities, or any such freedom from superstitious fears of nature, that man aspires, or is not afraid, to investigate. They who have not received the deliverance from despair and delusions with which Christianity emancipates the peoples that have received it never study nature. Even in its degraded forms, Christendom is freer than the highest paganism from what prevents the advance of knowledge ; and the most ignorant and superstitious peasant of Italy rejects, as plainly untenable, what the most intelligent Hindoo never questions, or believes as matters of course, what the latter never dreams of as possible.

Consider what it has done for the State. There is as yet no actually Christian state, it is true, in the sense of its being supremely controlled by Christ, yet all are immensely affected by it in legislation, in jurisprudence, in peace, and in war. The most backward land of Europe is very different from the most advanced in Asia, and has features in its life that would be an improvement upon the best specimens of heathendom. Europe and America are shaped and moulded, in all that constitutes their excellence, simply by the influence of Christianity.

Consider the mark it has made upon the home. How different are the homes of Christendom from those of heathendom! The latter are so

horrible that we shudder at the idea of being condemned to dwell in them, with their lust, their cruelty, their absence of that love and confidence that make our own so dear. And they are such, chiefly because of the effects of Christianity upon the condition of woman. Some may say that it has not raised her. They who tell us this, especially women who say so, ought to be afforded the opportunity to go where they can have womanhood without it, and thus practically find out what it has done to make her respected and other than a slave or a toy. Far more fond are the homes, far more honored are the women, of the least enlightened Christian land. This is a commonplace, and so need not be dwelt upon. Some tell us that our faith has not raised woman. So does a reverend gentleman in Richmond also tell us in this nineteenth century that the earth does not go round the sun.

Once more, consider the effects of Christianity upon the condition and treatment of the unfortunate. The poor, the sick, the helpless, the orphans, the insane, the weak, the blind, the dumb, are blessed by it; their lot is made very different from what it is elsewhere. Nowhere more than in this sphere, can we trace effects, not more beneficent than direct, to its influence.

Now there are two uses of this observation of the effects of Christianity. One is that in so richly blessing the world it is shown to be from God, and the true provision for human needs.

But this is not the use that is now to be made of it. For it also serves, for our present purpose, as an argument for the historical reality of Jesus Christ, at the time alleged by the Church.

Suppose that from some point of elevation you saw the ends of a number of straight but diverging roads coming out of the far distance. You could easily tell where, and how far away, they had diverged from a common point of departure. But suppose that, in place of this number of roads, there were so many streams of water, or so many beams of light, or so many sounds of music. Then you could not only tell by simple calculation how far away beyond your vision lay that unseen point of divergence, but you could also tell what would be found there, the size and quality of the fountain, or the brilliancy and nature of the luminary or the character and kind of the cause of the sounds, as the case might be.

So is it with these present observable effects of Christianity. They point back beyond our sight, into the past ages of history. But we can follow them up, and measure the law of their convergence as plainly as we can that of the streams, or of the rays, or of the sounds. And the result is that they all meet, about nineteen hundred years ago, in a common origin, in the land that we call Holy. They all go back to it, as the one centre whence they started to spread over the world, where they now are seen and felt.

But this is not all. We can tell what would be found there, could we reverse the course of history, or journey back up the ages that are gone. We find that, no less certainly than the streams would lead us to a copious and similar fountain, or the beams of light to an adequate and like constituted source of illumination, or the strains of music to a sufficient and an equally sweet instrument, would these effects of Christianity lead back to a person and a life like those of Jesus Christ, from whom alone could come the refreshing rivers that are gladdening the hearts of men, the brightness that is lighting them, the harmonies that are cheering them, in widely separated lands to-day.

And now we see the answer to a popular fallacy regarding the evidences both for Christ's historical existence and for His divine mission. Many really imagine that we are at a disadvantage now, as compared with those who lived in ages that are gone, and that each succeeding century renders the historical element in Christianity more difficult of verification. Upon this is based that position which has been referred to, that it is essential to our cause to lay little stress upon that element. But all this is precisely the reverse of the fact. Succeeding ages render Christ's mission and career more palpably certain, and not less, because they bring forth more and more results that can only be attributed to Him. We have far more reason to believe that

He existed than they who lived a thousand years ago; and much more reason to believe Him to be the world's Redeemer than those who saw and heard Him in His lifetime; for we see, as none before us have seen, what He can do and has done for man. So will those who come after us, though farther away from Bethlehem and Calvary, yet see more of that light which floods a world and has no other source than Jesus; and so will they know as we cannot the fullness of the blessing that was in Him.

But let us take another line of argument from the character of Christ.

When the name of Jesus is named it awakens a distinct conception of a perfect character. We all mean thereby a picture that exists in our minds, which is the world's supreme possession, the theme of the poet, the effort of the artist, the model of the teacher, the ideal of the Christian.

Now, note some features of this character, associated with the name of Jesus Christ.

It is faultless. Unbelievers no less than disciples agree that Jesus was perfect; perfect in joy, perfect in suffering, perfect in His relations with all who met Him and with whom He had to do. We know that, in any conceivable emergency, He would have acted as He did in those that are recorded. That is, His character, and His alone, is a model. He alone is copiable. We hold Him up to our children and only ask that

they may imitate Him. We know for ourselves that we should need no more, if we could be such as He was in this world. When we would seek to influence others about us, we endeavor to arouse this same desire in them, and the effort to better men is but to render them like Him, as sufficient to regenerate society and to transform the world.

Again, it is a catholic model of character. There is no one, man, woman, or child who cannot learn of Him and would not be better for doing so. And this is true of no one else. No actual life, if this is supposed not to be such, can be made a model. All others have their limitations as to age or locality; even if actually copiable in any one place or time, they would not be sufficient as universal ideals. The Buddhist could not ask to be only like his Sakya Muni; it would not be a sufficient light for Asia. We know that neither he nor any other teacher would suffice as a guide in the infinite variations of human experience. Yet this is the case with this Jesus. Whether high or low, rich or poor, on island or on continent, in dark or in brilliant ages, the imitation of Christ is always feasible, and a source of betterment and comfort. There are many kinds of saints in the Christian calendar, saints of every clime and every age and every circumstance, yet they all are such because they learned of Him and copied in their lives the spirit of His own.

For, again, this conception of a perfect character copiable by all, is found in all parts of Christendom. It is not confined to the more advanced Churches; it is found undefined yet real in the most degraded, in those of Asia as in that of England. All call this Jesus Lord, and, however gropingly they walk, all press towards Him as the faultless One. These various Churches have been severed, without communication, for ages; sometimes hostile and antagonistic, interested in finding weak points in each other, learning nothing from each other. Yet they all adore one Jesus, have the same model for conduct, possess this same treasure of a perfect character as an example.

Now, what is the origin of this universal idea of a Jesus, alone perfect, alone copiable by all the children of men? Plainly there are only two alternatives. Either such a life was lived, of which we have the story, or else the whole is a fiction. Either Jesus was historically real, or this character is the invention of man in the centuries of the past.

Was it possibly an invention? Could human skill have constructed such a character? To ascertain this is not very difficult, for we may know what man can do by what he has done. He has done a great deal in the way of depicting imaginary as well as real characters. His highest intellectual work has perhaps been in this line. We know how much labor has been expended in

biography, both in concealing the defects, and in heightening the virtues, of those whom the interest or affection of disciples or admirers has represented as models for others to follow; and also how men have eagerly sought out such lives as could be delineated for imitation. But, further, look at the mental power exercised in character painting in fiction, whether in the poem, the drama, the moral treatise, or the novel. Plato, Shakespeare, Scott, Corneille, are names that recall noble endeavors to give us ideals of humanity. Now, what is the result of all this, the work of giants? It is that not one has given us a perfect character, or a catholic one, one so living and acting and speaking in varying experiences, that we can accept it as a sufficient ideal for our children, or for this wide world with its countless forms of sorrow, of weakness, and of imperfection. Or even if any such fictitious character were a model where the author dwelt, it would be unsuited to the nearest nation; incomprehensible, perhaps absurd, to whole realms of distant people. In the Walhalla of man's creations, as well as in that of his biographies, Jesus Christ has no place. Among such memorials or such fiction His isolation and their shortcomings were but intensified. Thus, the perception of what man has done, at the high-water mark of his genius, shows us what is the best he can do, and discloses the fact that he cannot invent a Christ, nor even develop a saint into a

Jesus. Rousseau and Napoleon both said, long ago, the former out of a heart that was surely unfriendly enough to Christianity, that they knew man, and his capacities, and that the invention by him of such a character as Jesus would be a greater miracle than its reality.

The fact is that he does not really mean it who says that this character has been invented. It is a flippant utterance upon which he has not reflected, or he would see that what it involves is impossible ; that it has no more weight as an argument than to say that, because man makes ice by machinery, or constructs a mill-dam in some river, the Mer de Glace or the Falls of Niagara may have been due to his skill. It is an assertion that carries weight only with those who are too ignorant to know, or too superficial to consider, the limitations of human capacity.

And yet there are some who will actually have us believe, as reasonable men, that this picture, which is enshrined in Christendom, the beauty of which the human intellect despairs to equal in its fictions, and the saint to reproduce in his life, the copying of which is the only way to advance in grace of character, and which is the only source of inspiration for life, — they will have us believe, that this was the creation of some Jewish fishermen, in an age that was narrow and bigoted, who themselves had been trained in the most bigoted and narrow of its circumstances. This is too much to ask of us in days when we are expected to be critical and incredulous.

But no, say some, it was the later creation of the Church: Christians made this character, by a more or less gradual process. But what made them Christians? What made them such people as could evolve such an ideal out of their fertile minds? There seems to be no reply but that a Christ must have first made Christians those who could invent a Christ; and if Christendom made this Jesus, why has it not made another? Why, in all its literature, with all its advance since its lowly origin, has it not been able to give us some other fictitious life equally ideal? Or why is it that the Church has not yet grown up to realize, in a single member, this ancient fiction; has never yet produced a real Christ in the strength of its maturity, if it could create an ideal Christ in the weakness of its infancy? Why is it that the highest attainment of all its saints has been but the partial reproduction of this story? Surely, there is no explanation of all this, if the Jesus of the Church was but the evolution of its early and ignorant days. There is no reason to expect any attainment of such an ideal in the future thought or life of Christendom; still it were easier to believe that Christendom might yet in its progress reach such a capacity than to believe that it possessed it in its beginnings.

So then, if the character of Jesus is not that of one who lived and died and left such a memory, then the only alternative is the impossible

one that it is an invention of men, and of such men as we have said. Either Christ made the Church or the Church made Christ. The latter is a supposition that exceeds the wildest credulity of superstition, surpasses the absurdity of the fairy tales that children in the nursery, or the peasants of ignorant lands, believe. In presence of this character of Jesus, we can only say that it is due to a life once lived ; that we have a description of a person.. Jesus Christ was an historical reality.

Once more, let us see the evidence of things with which we are familiar, the Church and its institutions. This is an argument so conclusive that it is strange how any doubt can be raised as to the actuality of the person of Christ. It is like my friend's asking the evidence of the reality of Charles the Great in a structure built by him and rich in his memorials. It is like asking proof for the reality of William the Conqueror in presence of English history, or for the reality of the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth, or of George Washington in our own land, or of Michael Angelo in the Duomo of Florence. These things presuppose the persons, are their work, tell of them ; and so the Church is a monument, a fabric, that tells of Christ, and proclaims that it was originated for that purpose. No argument that can be urged, no evidence that can be adduced, whether documents, or books, or monuments of any other sort, is so conclusive as this, a society

that sprang from His creation. That is, when the Church is pointed out to one who asks the reasons for believing that Jesus actually lived and died, and rose, his demanding documentary, or any other, proof besides, is like a man who lives in the new world that was discovered by Columbus, asking to see documents to prove that Columbus was a real man.

Yet, there is a peculiarity about this argument which does distinguish it from the analogies that have been cited. The relation of Christ to the Church is closer than that of conqueror, or pilgrim, or discoverer, to his work. When we come to analyze the latter, we find other factors mingled in their history. There were other discoverers who coöperated with Columbus, other patriots who shared with Washington in the foundation of our liberties, other pilgrims than those who landed on the historic Rock; and we can plausibly claim honor for other names than these, as we consider historical events. But, as to the Church, there is no one but Christ to whom its origin can be attributed. It tells of Him alone. His reality stands as its only foundation. It is easier to believe that any one else than a Dante wrote the Divine Comedy than to believe that any one else than a Jesus originated the Church; easier to believe that some noble fabric that has its builder's name on corner-stone and pinnacle is inscribed with an untruth, than that the fabric of the Church, written all over

with the name of Jesus, proclaims a falsehood. We can separate the architect from his work. We cannot separate Christ from the Church.

This same principle of sufficient and appropriate reason, or cause and effect, applies to the institutions of Christianity, of which we select three.

One is Baptism. This is an ordinance of effusing or immersing, with the use of water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with the declaration that it was established by Jesus as the mode of initiation into His Church. It is not only now, but it has always been used for this purpose, and with this declaration. Furthermore, there have been, from the first, disputes about the value and methods of it. There have been sects and parties and persons interested in doing away with its use and obligation. Yet it continues, in all lands and divisions of Christendom, as a thing so manifestly handed down from a Christ who established it, so palpably assignable but to Him, and bearing on the face of it such tokens of His being its deviser and appointer, that no Christians have dared to dispense with it except a few insignificant sects which either are now extinct, or are fast dying out. Now, only a real Christ can have founded a rite that has been such a factor in the religious life, or that would not have died out ere this, as so many practices have done, which in themselves seemed more likely to endure.

Again, consider the Lord's Supper. This is a curious ceremony for the chief religious act of Christendom, and for such lands and days as our own. It is eating bread and drinking wine in our assemblies, a sort of meal in Church. It purports to have been instituted by Jesus Christ, on the eve of His crucifixion, for the purpose, among other things, of keeping fresh the remembrance of Him and His death. A part of the ceremony is, and always has been, rehearsing the alleged story of its appointment at the time to which it refers. Old liturgies that we possess, from a brief period after that date, contain this rehearsal, as well as those of to-day. There have been also special controversies about this rite. Christendom has been divided upon its details, yet all have clung to the ceremony as coming to each independently of the rest.

Now, is it not unreasonable to ask us to believe that a holy ordinance, one that is so ancient, coming to so many different lands by separate lines of transmission, one that was used as it is now by those who had opportunity to know, and every interest to proclaim, the truth about it, — that such an ordinance rehearses a falsehood, and then bases thereupon a pious and prayerful act of worship? It is difficult to understand how the existence of any person whom we have not seen with our own eyes can be certain, if this unique, this monumental, ordinance of the Holy Communion does not show the reality of Jesus Christ.

Consider, lastly, the Lord's Day, or Sunday. This, the first day of the week, is used as we use it because the Church appointed it at an early date to commemorate the resurrection and the triumph of the Church's Founder.

It adds, therefore, a new fact to those we have more particularly dwelt upon hitherto, the rising of Jesus from the dead. All the arguments for Christianity involve this fact. The foundation of the Church, the observance of Baptism and of the Eucharist, imply it, for two reasons. In the first place, a dead Christ could have founded nothing. Men do not trust and preach and urge on others as a Saviour one who, whatever he had been, yet died and was buried as other men. If Calvary had been the end of the story of Jesus, there is no reason to suppose that story would have lived a hundred years, much less that we should ever have heard of it. Stories much more apt to endure have been forgotten. And so this one, of a life lived obscurely in an obscure land, without leaving a line of writing or a single relic, followed by such convulsions as those that came over the land where it was lived, sweet as it was, would have been forgotten when the children had died to whom fathers might have told it, unless, after the disappointment of its end, Jesus had reappeared to send out those who should perpetuate it. His disciples went back from Jerusalem to their homes and fishing nets, and they would have stayed there, if a risen

Jesus had not called them to His work again. The Church as an organization would never have existed, for the memory of a martyr does not found a thing like that. But, more than this, the resurrection of Jesus cannot be separated from His story. We know no Jesus but the risen Jesus. The only sources whence we learn that He lived tell us that He rose. If we do not believe the evidence of His resurrection, we have no reason to believe that He ever existed. The only reason for believing that He uttered the Sermon on the Mount is a testimony that tells of His victory over the grave. The idea of a Jesus that died and did not rise is unknown to any but a few credulous skeptics. It has no historical warrant of any kind. Consistency may lead to denying both, but, if one is believed, the evidence for that is as strong for the other. It is either to no Christ or to a risen Christ, that we must come at last.

Now, the Lord's Day is a special witness of this. Here is one day of the week, observed all through the ages, in lands that have had no connection, in Churches as wide apart as India and Africa and Britain, and that have been willing to receive nothing from each other; which says of itself that it is set apart to be the day for Christians to express their joy for the resurrection that completed and assured their redemption. How can the day be accounted for if this testimony is not true? How can such a festival come

into being if the fact did not occur? How can it, with all its antiquity, and all its memories, bear a lie upon its face? It is more conceivable that the local festival of the Fourth of July is the commemoration of an event that never occurred than that this universal festival of Christendom is the memorial of what never took place.

But still further. This day is ostensibly the substitution of the first day of the week as the holy day, in place of the seventh, because the great fact which happened upon it authorized such a change by the Church. Now we have means of knowing that such a change was made. The Jews still keep the last day, Saturday, as the sacred one of the seven. They are still six days behind us in their religious services, and charge us with an unauthorized alteration in this respect. That is, the use of Sunday was a revolution. Now, how can this revolution and its success be accounted for unless there was reason for it in an event considered sufficient to warrant it? This abiding difference between us and the Jews shows the reality of the cause that led to it.

So do all these lines of thought, based upon present, palpable facts, arguments available to every one, show the historical reality of the career of Jesus Christ. It lies behind all our civilization no less than behind all our Christianity, as its cause and origin. It is the one fact on the forefront of the world.

But some, whose minds are peculiarly constituted, hesitate to assent to all this because of a hypothesis that they raise without perceiving what it involves. They say that our argument rests upon the trustworthiness of the founders of the Church. They are not prepared to say that these founders were deceivers, so they ask, may not these men have been deluded? Now this does not apply to the argument from the blessings conferred by Christ, nor to that from His character: they are untouched by any such hypothesis; yet it is conceivably the case as to the foundation of the Church and its institutions. That is, we may say it is speculatively possible that Christianity was originated by men who were convinced that Christ lived and died and rose as they taught, but who were under a great hallucination. But practically this does not help the doubter. Our reply to him is that it is an inadmissible supposition to conscientious and reasonable men, and more improbable than what it opposes.

In the first place, it is an impugnment, for which there is no warrant, of the intelligence of such men as John and Paul and their companions, who did such a work and showed such devotion unto death. There is no justification for such an attack upon their sagacity, no ground for saying that they are not just as trustworthy as any other men upon whom we rely for matters that we have not ourselves seen.

Again, if we say they were deluded, we make them the authors of Christianity. Then all the blessings of light and hope and redemption that it has brought are due to them. Then they have done for us what we ask and wish from God. They are gods to us. They are saviors. Then let us worship them; for, if it is they who have shown such love and such power, they deserve it, and no one else can claim it more rightly.

But, still again, there is then no gospel. If what we call such is the work of hallucinated men, then it is only speculation, only guesswork, and instead of having something to rest upon, as we had fondly hoped, we are thrown back upon our old misery. Heaven is still unopened. No voice has come thence. Our faith rests upon delusions. Our hope has no foundation. Sin must still be expiated by ourselves. We must still work and struggle in our own strength. And so this reply of the doubter plunges a world that had begun to take heart into unrelieved despair. It has still to wait for some response to all its appeals and prayers.

But, beyond all this, think what this assertion or doubt implies. It means that this world's greatest imposture has been its greatest blessing. That Christianity has been its greatest blessing is clear. It has done what nothing else has done to relieve the ills and to lighten the darkness of the world, to cheer our own lives, to comfort our loved ones, to hallow the saints of the ages.

Yet, if the work of deluded men, it is a fraud, and the supremest fraud in all earth's history. No lie has ever had such a power, no hallucination such a sway.

Now this cannot be allowed to be possible. It is immoral, it is opposed to conscience, it is wrong, to say that all the benefits of the gospel can be due to a delusion. For it means that the false can work for human good better than the true. Then why seek for truth? Then, consistently, we must ask, not what is true, but what will apparently work well? Let us seek delusions and ignore verities. The man who says this with which we are dealing affirms therein, not only that truth cannot be found, but that it would be love's labor lost if found, since it has no superior value over a deception. He affirms that it is just as well to teach falsehoods as facts. This is to doubt the reality of right and wrong. And furthermore, if it can happen that the greatest of benefits to others and ourselves can ensue upon an unequaled fraud, then why trouble ourselves to act rightly? If it has happened so once, in a great instance, why may it not again in our own cases? Why is it not probable that it will? When one says, "I will do evil that good may come," we can only reply that good cannot come from evil, and that the man who acts on that principle is immoral. Yet, if this hypothesis of which we are speaking be true, we cannot give that reply. We must say that perhaps it is

as well to do evil as to do good, that one need not concern himself about his conduct, his influence, his work, his teaching, if deluded men have been the world's highest benefactors by a fraud, innocent though they were of evil intent.

So we answer the objection that perhaps the Church was founded upon mistaken affirmations of some men as to Jesus, that it involves inadmissible suppositions, and is impossible to those who believe that good and evil are different things, that one must do right and must not do wrong, that sin and error injure, and righteousness and truth benefit, us and our neighbor. It is no relief to the perplexed, or to one who feels the force of doubt, for it is harder to believe than Christianity itself; and to teach it is to break the moorings for the lives and characters of ourselves, our children, and our fellow-men.

Yet, notice this. If you cannot accept this alternative there is no other. To this point the discussion has now attained. All thoughtful skeptics concede that one must either believe as the Church does, or explain Christianity by this theory of delusion, and as being, therefore, a fraud. They declare that there is no other relief. Unless you agree with us, say they, you must agree with the Christendom of the past.

So we sum up. The establishment of the Church by men whom we cannot suppose deluded without imperiling all righteousness, the institutions that bear the name of Christ on their

front, the character that is manifestly beyond human capacity to create, the blessings that can be traced to no other source, — all these facts make it sure, as no other event is sure in all human history, that that is true which the Church proclaims regarding Jesus ; and we know that in staking our hopes for time and for eternity upon Him, we are resting upon that which cannot be shaken, we are reposing upon the one certain thing amid the uncertainties of the past, our feet are on the Rock of Ages.

LECTURE IV.

WHO WAS JESUS CHRIST?

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." — *John* i. 14.

We have seen that Christianity is a revelation of comforting and saving facts regarding God's provision for our needs, made in the person and career of Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and rose, as the Church was founded to proclaim.

Now, who is He that has done all this for us? The question is important, most obviously, and is shown to be so by the very discussions regarding it. It was agitated for centuries by the keenest and holiest of minds. "What think ye of Christ?" is to-day the great theme of thought and controversy, and among men and women who do not take such trouble about trifles. It is important because, as disputants have seen, very extensive consequences depend upon the answer that is given. The whole form and character of Christianity, that is, of that religious life of the world about us which is the hope of the rest of the world, will be affected by the conceptions that are held of Him upon whom that religious life rests. It is very well to say, and there is

undoubtedly some truth in it, that the great thing is to follow Christ, and that our views of Him are secondary. It is true that orthodoxy has often given the impression that the prime concern is to think of Him rightly, and that right discipleship is of comparatively slight moment. It is nevertheless true that the question as to His rank in the scale of being is not a fruitless, unpractical inquiry, for the character of our discipleship will depend upon our opinion of Him who is our Lord and Master. Is is also true that the nature of our trust will depend upon our conceptions of Him whom we trust. The degree to which we have confidence in the facts disclosed will accord with our conviction as to the position of Him who discloses them. Faith is altogether conditioned by its opinion of its object. It has therefore been seen in history, and may be seen now, that the color, the shape, the permanence, the peace, of Christianity are connected with the answer to our inquiry.

And so all this discussion has been due to a desire to avoid error and reach truth in so important an issue. All earnest men wish their religious beliefs and hopes to be well founded and sincere, since Jesus Christ is inseparable from Christianity, inseparable to us from religion. Since the issue is forced upon us in books and magazines and newspapers, and by lectures, we must meet it. We must recognize its significance and deal with it, unless we are utterly in-

different to the great concerns at stake. It does not satisfy to say that the solution is beyond us. True, we cannot pretend to reach it perfectly. All lives are mysteries and run up into mystery. Much more is such a life, especially from the stand-point of the Church. Theology has too often alienated seekers by apparently claiming to make final formulæ of deep things, to understand God and man, and to explain their union, whether in sanctification, in providence, or in Incarnation; but the Church is committed to no such presumptuousness. It knows that its Lord's being is a fuller, richer thing than can ever be fathomed. And so, none but erratics, or would be Titans, claim to have scaled the heights opened by the contemplation of Christ. Yet these heights can be ascended, up to reasonable limits. We may expect to learn, to some extent, what can and what cannot be known. We can hope to gain some fixed points in the inquiry regarding the nature even of this Saviour, before whom the world stands in reverence, and the Church in faith, sufficient to enable us to say, not exhaustively, yet truly, who and what He is. With such data as are at its command we must surely grant this much to human intelligence, however humble be our estimate of it.

Perhaps our inquiry may be best conducted by discussing the answer that Christendom has reached, and then setting forth its verification.

The Church declares that this historical per-

sonage, Jesus Christ, is "God manifest in the flesh;" that behind that human life was a divine personality; yet that He was not the Father, but the second of a Trinity in the divine Unity, incarnate in humanity; the divine Being having such threefoldness that this Incarnation is both a possibility, and a manifest reality.

This is what the Church, and all Christians, save an inconsiderable few, have held since thought dealt with and answered the question we are considering. It is the form in which the gospel has been made known, has done its work, and is clung to to-day. Not only does the prevalence of this answer warrant our studying the theme by starting from it, as having the presumption in its favor, but it shows the issue to be met. The alternative presented is tremendous. If this belief is a mistake, then Christianity has been involved in a stupendous error; has been, and is, fundamentally wrong. For it vitiates everything else to err radically on the nature of Deity. Then no feature of the gospel can continue to stand as it is now held, since every other part is affected by this one. Every phase of objective and subjective Christianity must be changed if there is error here; and all Christendom, all Christian life and thought, are condemned, as fostering a delusion that is a blasphemy. On the other hand, if this view of Christ is true, the denial of it is an equally stupendous error, and is a loss that is without equal,

for it means the rejection of the vision of God among men, denial that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

In studying this subject, it will help us to ascertain first how this conclusion was reached; for it is possible with little technicality of terms to tell to any one the story of the process.

I call it a process, for such it was. There is no doubt as to the rank that the Church from the first accorded to its Lord. Christians loved and adored Him, sung praises and uttered prayers to Him, declared in their simple services and in their use of the formula of baptism, their ascription to Him of supreme lordship. But, very naturally, this belief entered into their life before they asked and thought how it was true. They did not at first labor at the question, how can He be such? How is this lordship to be harmonized with the truth about the unity of deity? But they were compelled to labor at it very soon. From without and from within came the question and answers, accompanied by explanations which had to be weighed, and either approved or condemned. One person or sect after another had its hypothesis, and each had to be scrutinized, whether it were allowable, according to the criteria that must control. So, by a process of exclusion of inadmissible explanations, and of adoption of necessary steps in advance, the Church came, at length, to formulate its definition of what it understood by the formula of

baptism, In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and of what it meant by Christ being the Son of God: that doctrine to which it has clung so unalterably ever since, and which is the one indestructible thing in the changes and revolutions of Christian history.

Some tell us that the matter cannot be viewed in this way; that it must be settled by the New Testament alone; that this belief can stand upon no other ground. Some say so who believe the doctrine in question, and, undervaluing the thinking and authority of the Church, assert that they find it in the Scriptures sufficiently defined. It is a pity that the early Christians could not find it so definitely expressed there, for it would soon have put an end to controversy, and averted the necessity of Councils. It would also have rendered any words superfluous in the Creed beyond the quotation of some such texts.

To another class of objectors, who say that we must give texts for our doctrine or not expect them to accept this belief of Christendom, we reply that we regard ourselves, and them, bound to accept plain inferences from sufficient data, and that necessary correlation of them which holy thinking has made evident. We admit that no words can be put on the lips of people, as of divine obligation, that are not from divine sources; and, conversely, we insist that it is reasonable to expect acceptance of a definition based

upon divine foundations so directly as is that of the Church's faith.

For the truth is that the New Testament contains facts and statements that can lead to no other definition of Christ than the one which Christendom reached, and by which it abides, while it may contain no specific texts that sufficed to settle controversy between those who took different ground in interpreting the sacred writings. Some phraseology was needed, as the interpretation of Scripture and the expression of the meaning of faith in Jesus Christ, which would be unmistakable, to which Christendom would cling, and to which all must assent who would speak for the Church and claim its indorsement for their teaching. Let us now trace the process more in detail.

The standard by which Christian thought guided itself in this steering between conflicting views is, of course, to be noticed at the outset. It was not so simple as some appear to imagine. The object was to think rightly, both of Christ and of Deity, and to avoid thinking wrongly. To this end, the Church had the utterances of Christ Himself, and of His Apostles regarding Him, both directly and indirectly bearing upon the theme. The former are immediate assertions of His rank, the latter are statements regarding the relation in which His people are to stand towards Him, as the object of trust and homage.

This teaching came down by tradition received

from those who had heard Him, and embodied in the life of Christianity. It came in the worship, the services of the Church. It came in the Sacraments. These last certainly conveyed a very distinct idea as to the position which Jesus was to be accorded in Christendom, and therefore it was a fundamental idea, not one of later initiation. The teaching also came in Apostolic writings, which, as we shall see, though not yet so exclusively relied upon as they came to be later, still contained enough to guide thought when it would meet foes without, and error within the fold.

All this at once excluded any idea that Jesus was merely a man. There was a slight attempt to give such an explanation of Him, called Ebionism. It was the view of some Jewish Christians, who could not abandon their conceptions of God, and thought that any ascription of divine rank to Jesus conflicted with Monotheism. They regarded Him as the Messiah, who was miraculously born, rose from the dead, was sinless and perfectly inspired, yet only a man of miracle. It may be worth noting, in passing, that no Christians ever held any lower view. Some, outside the pale, heathens and Jews, affirmed that he was only a Jew born of wedlock, though unusually good and gifted; but no Christian, none who regarded Him as Master or Lord, did so, as no one ever can, for it is absurd so to regard such a Jesus. Yet these few Ebionites, who did make

Him a Saviour, denied Him to be of more than human rank; said that He was miraculous, yet a creature. But this view did not spread nor live. It was confined to a few among the Jews. It had no foothold at all among the Gentiles, for it was seen to be incompatible with the utterances of Jesus, with the teachings of Apostles, and with anything like that trust or adoration of Him which had been the very characteristic of Christianity from the beginning. We must never lose sight of this, that primitive Christianity, instead of holding that our Lord was but human, however extraordinary, repudiated the idea, as not to be entertained for an instant, in the presence of what was known about Him and His work, as soon as a sect arose from Jewish prejudices to maintain it; and this sect found no place, and died out in a few years. It has been so ever since. This conception of Christ was resuscitated in recent times under the name of Socinianism, but has not been able to live among those that pretend to believe in Him as in any sense a Redeemer. It has had on its side earnest and gifted men, and has had in its favor a seeming simplification of great problems, yet no Church, no sect, has adopted it. It has not been able to form a sect for itself that remains Christian, in the real sense, and has gained no foothold in the Church of baptized and believing people. It is found to be so incompatible with the very nature of Christian discipleship, so conflict-

ing with the needs of religion instead of supplying them, that religious people will have none of it. As unreligious men do not care for it, since they have no reason to ask that even this much be accorded to Jesus, this conception of Him, a friendless applicant for admission into human thought, is again disappearing into the region of inadmissible speculations, as it did when every door was closed upon it seventeen centuries ago.

So it is a fact that the thought of the Church, as soon as it began to think, had really no other problem to deal with than this, — how can Christ be God manifest in the flesh? All agreed, save the unimportant few, that divine rank belongs to Him, according to the nature of Christianity and its fundamental positions. But the issue how that is to be defined had to be met. Various replies were suggested, and many conflicting ones, all claiming apostolic authority and Scripture teaching in their behalf, and Christians had to settle which were allowable and which were not, in view of loyalty to Him, to their conscience, and to God.

One reply suggested was that He was God and nothing else, that His humanity was a mere phantasm, that His apparently human experiences, such as being touched, being weary, rejoicing, suffering and being crucified, were only semblances. This was called Docetism, or the hypothesis of semblance. Perhaps this was the greatest danger that the Church ever met. It

spread so rapidly that at times, in the second or third century, if the list of the baptized had been polled, it would probably have had the majority. This is a very significant fact. It shows how untrue it is to say that the Church by a gradual process made a man into a God. It shows that the original impression made by Jesus was such that His disciples tended at the first to deny that He was human at all; that they who lived nearest to Him had, not the greater, but the less, realization of His manhood; and that the work of thinking and leading minds had to be that of persuading the mass of people that He was really man. That is, instead of working up to the addition of His Godhead to His Manhood, the actual process was working down, against Docetic exaggeration, to the apprehension of his manhood: a limitation, not an extension, of His divinity.

One evidence of all this is seen in the Apostles' Creed. Why was it necessary to say that Christ suffered, was crucified, died and was buried? Because so many denied these facts, affirming that His divinity precluded them; and those passages were put there to prevent Christians being misled into the denial of our Lord's humanity. They record the fact that, while disbelief in His deity had never yet endangered the Church, this error so nearly swamped it at its birth that the Creed had to be so shaped as to combat it.

It became clear that Docetism was untenable. All that believers knew of Christ, by Scripture and tradition and common sense, all that others who had seen Him told them, made it certain that He was human as any one else; and consequently the question arose, how the divine in Him could be maintained while asserting His humanity. And this cost the keenest conflicts that have ever been known in the history of human thought, the acutest discussions ever pursued about deep things.

There were two principal views or hypotheses advanced, between which Christian thought had to find some middle ground that it could stand upon.

One was that view, very widely and acutely urged, called Sabellianism, after its chief exponent. It said that Christ was, in an indiscriminating sense, God, the full manifestation of all that can be predicated of deity. Some held that He whom we call Father is the Eternal, personal deity, looked at as the source of all being; then, as manifested in the work of Christ, we call Him Son; and in the work of the Holy Spirit we call Him by that third name. Others, and most of the advocates of this opinion, said that deity is originally not personal at all, but only the impersonal absolute, and that Christ is, as is also the Father, one of the three personal forms that this absolute One assumes in succession. That is, all this school taught that the Triunity in God is

not a real threefoldness, but only one of manifestation, — three masks through which He looks out among us, who Himself is unitarian, not complex in any sense or manner. This theory had two leading difficulties. One was that, if Christ revealed God as threefold, then He must be threefold, or the revelation does not reveal the truth about Him. If anything is true of the Gospel, it is that it represents God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If He is not such, but only is manifested as such, then we are no wiser than before ; on the contrary, we have been misled. The other difficulty is that Christ, instead of confusing Himself with the Father or the Holy Ghost, always distinguishes between Them and Himself, is sent by the one, and sends the other. These objections led the Church to see that Sabellianism was no relief, and not a permissible hypothesis, in the discussion how Christ could be God while there is yet but one true God.

It would seem plausible to say then that, if Christ must not be confused with the Father, nor made synonymous with deity, there is no alternative but to hold that He must be distinguished from real deity ; that, though all the homage and worship accorded Him may and must be continued, He is yet to be excluded from actual Godhead. This was what Arius and his party affirmed. In the interest of what Christianity clearly demanded, they admitted

that He was not of human or angelic rank, but higher than all, and fit to be accorded supreme honors and titles; yet they held that He is not God as the Father is; He is dependent, not self-existent. They argued for this theory, not merely upon the basis of its being the only alternative to Sabellianism, but from the name "Son of God," affirming that if He is Son, then, however exalted, He is yet not of equal exaltation with the Father, and could not be; He must be other than the Eternal. But this had greater difficulties than the theory it would supplant.

It made Christ a creature, however highly exalted, and therefore unfit to be adored, unwarranted in claiming that allegiance and that homage which Christians give Him, and which was the original relationship in which He placed Himself to His people. It also made one divine who was not actually such. It gave us a godlike God. This is polytheism, after all; and Christians would not allow that any one but the Eternal could be partaker of the divine characteristics. It also leads to this dilemma: if Christ is not true God, then He cannot reveal God, for only God can reveal God. It was claimed by Arianism that Christ did this, yet it is difficult to see why we need make Him more than a mere man if we do not concede His deity, since the most exalted creature is no more capable of revealing God than the humblest; and so the assistance rendered to the problem by Arianism is only

imaginary. This has been so fully perceived by others since, that an attempt to revive Arianism has fallen dead in this century. It has no advantage over the complete denial of Christ's divinity; it does not relieve the difficulty any more than its rival, Sabellianism. The latter can square with some features of our Lord's story, and some of His utterances. The former is in hopeless conflict with all that He said and claimed. The dispute which it raised turned upon including or excluding an iota in a Greek word, which makes all the difference between saying that the Son was the same as God, or only like God; and some, following Gibbon, have sneered at so much controversy over a letter. But that is true which Froude reports Carlyle as saying, that, though he once likewise sneered at the dispute as unimportant, he yet came to see, at last, that in that iota Christianity itself was at stake. If Arius had won, he adds, Christianity would have dwindled away into a legend. For this was the issue: Was the Gospel a communication and a redemption made by a creature, or by our God? If the former, it had no reason to claim enduring supremacy; it contained no warrant for our trust.

But now there seemed to be a deadlock, if Christ was not the same as the Father, nor yet different in rank and nature. To the many, there seemed no third alternative. What is to be done? they asked. Is it possible that room

for Christ's deity can be found in the idea of God? Yes, said the thoughtful mind of the Christian Church, under the lead of such peerless men as Origen and Athanasius, it can.

What is the true conception of God? It is not the heathen idea of an impersonal absolute, nor as some arbitrary speculators, reasoning partly from Judaism, but chiefly from philosophical assumptions, affirm, that of a monad, a simple, unitarian being. It is the conception of the Eternal One as having a threefold, complex life. This is the only way in which God is made known in the Gospel. It is the form of His name into which we are to be baptized. It is the way in which He is spoken of, in all the New Testament, by Jesus and His Apostles. So the thought of Him is not exhausted when we say Father; and, as would seem obvious, if words have any meaning, the Son is not only like the Father, but of the same rank in the scale of being, and must be of the same nature: not created, but divine.

It was then seen that the only conception of God given to us in revelation is that of unity in threefoldness, and that thus the deity of Christ, which had to be conceded if He rightly claimed our homage, could be affirmed without making Him identical with the Father or the Holy Ghost. In this way the dilemma is solved which otherwise would be hopeless indeed.

This result and conclusion were formally an-

nounced at the Council of Nice in 325, which did not claim to create the fact, or add a doctrine to the faith ; but did claim, as against contending parties, that the Christian idea of God is such that each of the Three is to be regarded as really divine, that all Three form the completed definition of the Eternal One, and that thus the Church's Lord was the incarnation of the Second in the undivided divine Unity of the Three.

And this doctrine of the Trinity has stood ever since, permanent in Christianity. Reformations and schisms and sects have not shaken it in the belief of Christians. People have given it up, when giving up Christianity, but, with insignificant exceptions, they have not done so while believing in Christ as a Saviour. The reason is, of course, that no Christian will be content with a Saviour that is less than divine, nor concede Christ to be less than He claims ; while he will neither confound Him with the Father nor the Sanctifier, for the distinction between them is obviously necessary to the religious mind. This indestructibility amid such divisions on other points would seem to be evidence of its truth. At any rate, it has been shown that there can be no Christianity without it that can work or endure.

And we see how this doctrine was reached, a matter about which there is much confusion of thought. It did not come from metaphysical speculation that, as some tell us, conquered the

Church when it gave up piety for philosophy. Nor did it come from exaggerated use of isolated texts. It was the result of a process of inquiry, — How is it that Christ is really our Lord and worthy of our adoration? Which led to asking, What is God revealed to be in the Gospel? That is, study disclosed the truth which has ever since been accepted, that God as revealed to us is threefold in His being.

What reason have we for disputing this? One who does so must claim that he knows what God is, apart from His revelation of Himself. This is the claim of some, by virtue of which they reject our belief and teach that He is unitarian in His life. But how do they know that their idea is right? It has no authority. It has never been held by any religion in the world. All religious belief apart from Christianity and its forerunner, the faith of Israel, and the religion of Mahomet derived therefrom, has been pantheistic or polytheistic. The only conception that has any value for us is that which He has given us, for we only know God according to what He tells us of Himself, and what is told us is that He is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, not any one of these alone. This is the sole way in which He is presented to us in the Gospel, by Jesus or His Apostles, and there is no foundation for the unitarian idea but the philosophical speculation of a Great First Cause, which indeed God is, but which is not the God the Christian worships and loves.

But is it verifiable? Is this doctrine, which is so inseparable from the Incarnation, more than a result of pious logic? Can it be shown to be necessary, to candid minds? These are reasonable questions, and Christian thinkers have always replied that they can be met to the satisfaction of the religious conscience. We do not dwell upon metaphysical arguments, such as that God cannot be conceived of, either as a thinking or as a loving being, save as a Trinity in Unity. There is force in these arguments. Beyond question, they are unanswerable. As to the former, a thinking being becomes complex in his life by the very fact of self-consciousness. That is, to those who say that God is unitarian, we reply that neither a divine personality nor any other ever did or can live a unitarian life. It is an impossibility to intelligent existence. Pantheism has some philosophical plausibility. Unitarianism has none whatever. As opposed to the latter, it is obvious that if God is loving He must have within Himself an object of love, or else He was not actually loving until creation came into being; unless the world was eternal, as some admit in order to avoid the dilemma.

Again, look at it in this way. God is love. This will be disputed by no one with whom we are now concerned. If, then, He is loving, He must act accordingly and do deeds of love. But how can this be, unless He is in some way so constituted that it is possible for Him to come,

or speak, or act towards us? A God so constituted that it is impossible that there be in Him that which we call the Son or the Holy Spirit, is reduced to a God who has in Him nothing by virtue of which He can do more than, at the most, feel love without any practical display of it. That is, the denial of the Trinity means to the Church a denial of that conception of God which makes goodness and mercy possible, and renders Him a self-contained being, with no characteristics by which He can enter into relations outside of Himself.

Or, look at it in another light. Is your salvation, is your sanctification, as well your creation, the work of God or of a creature? The religious heart cannot admit the latter; it is revolting. But, if revelation through the Son, and sanctification through the Holy Ghost, are divine works, then they must be effected by divine agents, that is, God must be such that He can be to us Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier. If He can be to us these three, He must be threefold. Call it three persons, or what you will, threefold operation means a threefold line of self-determination in God.

Do we understand this doctrine? No one claims to do so who is to be respected for his judgment. We do not, and never can, know the inner life of God. But this we do know, that He has manifested Himself as a Trinity, and that we must cling thereto, or else ascribe our

redemption and spiritual life to creatures. And all we mean is, that God is so constituted that, while One, He can yet be and is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in fact as well as in semblance.

Do not some hold this who say they are not in accord with the Church, and will not use the word "Trinity"? Probably, yes. And, if any one does hold it, he holds what the Church means and is aiming at, the divine character of redemption and regeneration. That he shrinks from using the Church's words and creeds is usually due to imagining that they imply what extravagances have made of them. He may not, because of misapprehension, see, with the Church, that these show really the nature of God; but he grants the Church's essential demands who ascribes to God alone the glory of the rescue and sanctification of this world, and we can only regret his not using the Church's language.

So much for the doctrine of the Trinity. We had to deal with it in asking who is Jesus Christ, for, if He is "God manifest in the flesh," it can only be because, as the Gospel indicates, the nature of God renders this a possibility. And we see how it is not the weakness of Christianity, as some say, but its strength, and is that idea of God which makes the Gospel good news and a treasure to mankind, the idea which alone gives us a God who can love and can be loved.

But now let us revert to the main issue again. Some may ask whether, if the deity of Christ

necessitates the Trinity in God, the former is sufficiently assured to base upon it such a fact? The Church reached this belief, as we have seen, from the premiss that its Lord and Founder was divine. Can that be satisfactorily shown to us, critical and candid men? This is a fair question, and is entitled to an answer.

We may answer that He claimed to be divine. Of this it is difficult to see any reasonable denial, when it is understood. We will not now consider texts, but consider the attitude which He takes before men, and that which He expects men to take before Him. He asks allegiance, love, trust, homage. He presents Himself always as expecting us so to bear ourselves towards Him. That is claiming divinity; for no one has a right to ask this, nor any reason to expect it to be granted, upon any other basis. He thus assumes the relation that only God should, or ever will, receive from unsuperstitious men. But, some will say, He calls us to Himself, as other teachers do, that He may lead us to God. But other teachers have never done this as He did, claiming adoration and the heart's surrender. No one, no false prophet or true friend of man, has ever said, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." It would mean attracting humanity away from its only rest, enslaving it in a dangerous and wicked dependence upon another than its Lord. That is, if Christ is not God, He has not only demanded what no other has dared to demand,

but He has been the great power in history to draw the world away from its God, to lean upon another stay and another trust.

But it may still be said that more is needed to satisfy us that Christ is God. Not only must it be proven to us, we must ourselves see it, before we can be expected to believe it. True, we should not, and cannot, feel sure of anything until we see it for ourselves. That is the principle of these lectures.

The question comes down, then, to this, Do we see that Jesus Christ is God? If He is, He must plainly appear to be such. Perhaps we must first, before settling this question, settle what God is, so as to ascertain what He would look like, did we see Him on earth, under the form of humanity.

What is God essentially? What makes Him God? What is that which constitutes His glory, His supremacy, His splendor, and secures the adoration of His creatures? Of course this, whatever it is, must be seen in any alleged incarnation, for His creatures could not recognize Him unless this divine glory, this which marks off the difference between Him and them, were perceptible. What is this?

Is it omnipotent power, superiority to limitations and incapacities, all-conquering and resistless might? If this is what makes Him God, then surely we do not see it in Jesus, the often weary, thwarted, tortured, crucified One; and then He is not God.

Is the glory of God His wisdom? Is He essentially omniscience? Does that constitute His divine isolation? If so, then, as we certainly do not see this in Jesus, who not only shows but affirms His limitations, saying there are things that He knows not, He may be denied to be the divine Incarnation.

Is that glory, again, His state of majesty and splendor? Is He who is enthroned, known and regarded as God by the creatures who surround Him, because of the ineffable light that dazzles, or the accessories of dominion that awe? If so, then, surely we do not see this in the humble Jesus, who was so approachable, so lowly, so unfeared; and where the glory of God is lacking, there cannot be the vision of God.

That is, if, proceeding from these assumptions, one tell us that the appearance of God would mean such a vision as they would lead to; that, to see God incarnate, he must see a resplendent, stately, all-wise, invincible person, one who would cast into the shade, by these features, all the heroes and sages and monarchs of history, — we can only admit that, by this test, Jesus Christ cannot be proven to be divine. But we can fancy another replying — yes, there are many who do reply to the question, What would you expect to see if you saw God among men? — in this way: I should not expect to see that splendor and might, for I could not be sure that the possessor of it was my God. Some angel, or some Lucifer,

might assume a majesty that would dazzle me, and display a power that would awe me, and so such things would not prove the presence of my God. But, to be sure of seeing Him, to have a disclosure of His presence that would leave no room for doubt that it is He, I should expect His Incarnation to be the manifestation of a heart, a character, that would be unmistakably divine. So I should expect to see a goodness such as earth had never known, a holiness such as had been found in no creature. I should expect to see a love that is all-embracing, and never discouraged; a patience that never falters even under ingratitude, cruelty, and death. That is what I should expect to behold, for what makes Him God to me is the infinite love that isolates Him. That is the basis of His dominion. On that His throne reposes. Because of that the worlds adore Him. That is God's glory. Power and wisdom and state are but the trappings of His majesty, the garments that kingliness puts on. And just as a king may lay aside the robes and state of royalty to go on some errand of mercy, and be no less a king because retaining his kingly heart and kingly rank, so could the Eternal Son discard the paraphernalia of His splendor, and be no less divine, when He would come in lowlier guise to rescue and recall a world.

Would not this reply be true? As you bow before God, and serve Him with humble heart

and bated breath, then you think of Him as the One before whom angels veil their faces and the very heavens are not clean, as the One entitled to the lordship of all that lives, do you not know and feel that you do so because of what He is; not because of His power or greatness, but because of His fathomless love, His infinite, perfect goodness? You must do so, if you know true godliness among men.

If this be so, it is that which we are to look for when we look for God. This is what we should expect in an incarnation, the display in human conditions of the divine character Is not this seen in Jesus Christ? Surely it is visible to all, that in Him are a character, and a personality, that are not creaturely, but divine. If perfect loveliness is the glory of God, we see "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

And we see it nowhere else. There have been good men, but no infinite goodness. There have been lives that showed kind hearts, but none that showed such a kindness as can sit upon the throne of the universe. There have been godlike men, but none among them was a God-Man. We see the glory of God in no Socrates, nor John, nor Cæsar, nor Buddha. In all history we see the divine in the human, only and solely in the person and career of Jesus of Nazareth.

And so we come back to the question that we set out to answer: How is Jesus Christ visibly and perceptibly God? And we reply that we

know Him to be such because He looks like God, is what God is. The assertion of His deity is strange to some only because they start with a wrong conception of deity, and then tell us He does not meet it. But it does not at all appear strange to those who start from the true and high idea of God. To them, who have grown out of low conceptions of greatness and gained more elevated apprehensions of majesty, of moral, personal splendor, it needs no proof of texts, nor Church authority, to make us believe that God was in Christ, for it is plain and manifest. It may be, it is, true that what some people may mean by God is not incarnate in Him; but what the Christian means is there. The God we worship, the God whom we have in mind in the utterance of that name, that is what we see in Jesus. To us, through those eyes looks out the divine mind, through those lips speaks the divine heart, that life in all its parts, its lowliest as its most glorious moments, shows to us God as we believe in Him. Yes, in its greatest apparent antithesis to divinity, the divinity of that life is most apparent. If the heart is what is most divine in God, and if the character of Jesus is what shows the unapproachable and uncreated majesty that marks Him, then never was Jesus so divine, never does His deity so shine out, as when that goodness went farthest, and was most tried in suffering; when that love was most displayed in sacrifice for the sins of the world. That tender-

ness was most superhuman when He died for those who scorned Him; when those cheeks were wet with tears, and that brow was stained with blood; when those eyes looked out from beneath the crown of thorns, when that face was wan and worn with the night of agony, then do we see supremely "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

But some may still say, How can God become man? We do not nakedly affirm this; we say that God showed Himself through humanity, that, in our Lord, God the Son lived humanly. Well, how can this be?

This objection is only another form of the one just referred to, based upon a mistaken conception of God, and adds thereto an equally erroneous conception of humanity.

Some evidently imagine that the Incarnation means the compression of an infinitely big or great being into the narrow compass of humanity. But God is not to be thought of as having any extensiveness or bigness: He is a Spirit, and spirits have no more size than color. If this is not in the mind, of course, incarnation seems impossible and absurd, for no sensible man can admit or imagine that one whose infinitude is that of extensiveness was made known in Jesus, or can be made known, in any way, to men or angels.

But realize that God's infinitude is intensive, not extensive; is that of quality, not quantity;

realize that it is perfectness, not measurelessness; that a limitless personality does not mean one that is of endless extent, but of infinite goodness, — and then the question is, not whether the infinitely great can contract itself into the compass of a human soul and its life, but whether the unlimitedly perfect One can show Himself through the instrumentality of a human life. Is human nature, or is it not, capable of being the channel of God's displaying Himself to His creatures in His true glory? That it is so, is evident, if you conceive aright what that nature was made for. It was made to show forth character. Now, why cannot a humanity, a soul, properly prepared, as was that of Jesus, be capable of showing forth a perfect, that is, a divine, character? A musician can express his thought, his life, in no ordinary piece of wood or metal, but, if he finds one prepared, an instrument that is fit, he can through it show forth the harmonies of his mental creation. So, while other natures, or created things, may not be such, human nature is, by its very constitution, adapted to show forth the life, the thought, of our Maker. Or look at it in this way. Every soul is like a lens through which we can see some rays of the light of goodness. It was intended to be such. Why may there not be one, suitably originated and shaped, which could focus and show all the glory of the sunshine, transmit all the rays of full-orbed, holy love? It is difficult to see why, if

human life is meant to express indwelling character or personality, there may not be a life, properly begotten, in which should be expressed the indwelling character or personality of God.

Now, it only remains to ask, Was the life of Jesus such? We have answered this by saying, Yes, the life of Jesus was the life of God under human conditions, as manifestly as can be conceived. He said He was God. He acted as God. He put Himself into relations that God can alone bear to the world. He looks like God.

Suppose a creature, however highly exalted, were to be incarnate, do you think he would act as Jesus did, or speak as He did, or make the impression He made? We should find a conscious inferiority to the Highest. But here we find none. We should find humility before God. But here is one who says: "I and my Father are one." We should find dependence upon the Creator; but here we hear One saying: "I am the Life." No, he knows not how creatures must act, knows not how holy creatures do act, in the presence of the Creator, who says that the bearing of Christ was that of one of them.

Thus, strange as it may seem to some, and difficult to believe to the mere philosopher or to the heathen, it is not strange to the Christian, has not seemed strange to the Church, to believe in the Incarnation. It is a necessity to those who know what God is like, it is the irresistible

testimony to the very senses, and the only verdict of common sense. Not because others tell us so, but because it is a patent fact to us, with our educated conceptions of Deity, we live, and expect to die, by the belief that those hands that touched the suffering of old, and that lifted up the fallen, were the ministers of a divine pity; that the words that brought that illumination to the world, which has lighted it up ever since, were from a divine mind; that the promises which have been the stay and peace of generations were the promises of a divine power; that the holiness of the life that met the demands of justice in the place of imperfect lives was the holiness of the Son of God; that the sacrifice which made atonement for the race's guilt was the sacrifice of the Lord Himself for those who had ruined themselves by sin; that the resurrection which opened the gates of immortality was the triumph of one who had in Him the power of an endless life; and that the ascension from Olivet was the Incarnate Word assuming forevermore His throne. The Christian Church, the body of believers, have decided that this is Christianity, its power, its value, its essence, that without which any system is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Does not this Catholic faith land us in seeming contradictions and insoluble difficulties? Certainly it does. We cannot explain the relationship of the Persons in the Trinity to the Unity, nor that of the Incarnate Son to the divine es-

sence. But what of it? We are everywhere surrounded by the inexplicable, and every man who thinks has to hold what the great thinker taught us to call the antinomies. Belief in God in any form, in His care, in His eternity, leads us to contrasts or apparent antagonisms that human thought can never harmonize; includes factors which cannot be reduced to any formula. Christianity, as Butler showed, has no difficulty of this kind that does not equally beset philosophy. What are we to do? One course is to stop thinking, to ignore the whole matter, and accept agnostic confessions of mental impotence from the very beginning. We cannot, we will not, do this. It is as wrong as it is vain to expect that an extinguisher upon mental activity will be submitted to. Another course is to sacrifice one horn of the dilemma to the other. So have some done with Christ. Some have denied His divinity, others His humanity, in order to solve the problem and gain simplicity. Of course, any problem can be solved if one is at liberty to suppress troublesome factors, but it is hardly wise, or the way to a satisfactory result. The third course is to act as we do every day in common life, — to recognize all the evident factors and go without a solution if it cannot be reached without denying some of them. This is what Christendom has done. It affirms that Jesus is both God and man, because both are equally manifest, but admits frankly that there is no formula that

will satisfy all the conditions, and repudiates the folly of seeking relief by some statement that might be simpler, but only at the cost of one or more of the truths that are all of equal preciousness and importance to the believing and the needy soul.

Shall we ever be better off? Perhaps, to some degree hereafter, but we shall never understand the inner life and relations of the God-Man. Only God can understand His relations to the human, in creation and providence; and more obviously true is it that only He can comprehend His relations in a life lived under human conditions. And so to all eternity it will be true, as Jesus said: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, and no man knoweth who the Father is but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal Him."

In the roof of the apse of the Church of Santa Sophia, in Constantinople, the emperor who built it placed, on the gilt background of mosaic, a colossal figure of Christ in colored stones, which, with outspread hands, looked down upon the worshipers. When the Moslems captured New Rome, they changed this church into a mosque, and replaced this brilliant picture by new blocks of golden stone or glass. But the contrast between the new and the older gilding was so marked that it made no less distinct, though colorless and dim, the outlines of the figure of the Saviour. And so for centuries since the Mo-

hammedans, with such imperfect views of Jesus and His revelation, have been worshiping there, in the presence of a shadow of Christ, and bowed beneath the benediction of His outstretched arms.

Thus it is that, to many minds about us, there has faded from the heavens over them the loveliness and beauty of the Son of God. They see but a Jesus who is like the world of men about them, though perhaps more golden. They only find in Him a shadow of what He once had been to them in earlier days ; and though they may not see Him in all His splendor, though they may not even realize His presence, yet He bends over them in blessing. But when faith comes back to them, when again they rear the shrine that their hearts call for, and restore the love and trust that made their fathers what they were, they will see Him again in all His glory, they will reinvest Him with His divine character, and over them once more will they see, to their joy and to their comfort, the more than rainbow-hued beauty of "the image of the Invisible God."

LECTURE V.

WHAT DID CHRIST FOUND?

"The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." — 1 *Tim.* iii. 15.

HAVING seen who Jesus Christ is, we now come to the question, What did He found? What did He leave behind Him? or, what is the idea of the Church?

Here we open up a subject that has long been the theme of acute and brilliant controversy upon more than one issue that is involved. Let us endeavor to discuss it as simply as possible, and with reference to the principal differences of opinion on the subject.

And first we notice that, immediately and strictly, Christ founded nothing. Some seem to think differently, however, and speak of "the Society that Jesus formed," as if there was such a thing, which of course would then be the norm for us forever. But it is difficult to see how in any sense He can be said to have formed a Society. During His lifetime, His followers came and went, walked with Him and fell away, with notable fickleness; and as to those who were more intimately associated with Him, even they

forsook Him in His peril. One betrayed Him, their leader denied Him, and all returned after His crucifixion to their homes and their pursuits. Surely we cannot look at such a state of affairs for the beginning of that brotherhood which has done His work in the world. Such a Society, if it is entitled to that name, with no organization, no agreed belief, no capacity for endurance, would never have been heard of again, had it been the whole of the movement that Jesus initiated. It may have a certain attractiveness, as a collection of men united by common regard for Him, but it had not one of the features which have marked that Church which has been a blessing to mankind.

But, again, the Church could not be founded until after He had risen from the grave, ascended, and sent the Holy Spirit. They who hold the view just referred to limit their idea of the Church to what he initiated in His life, because usually they do not believe that He did these things. But, to those who do believe that the grave was not the end of His career, the matter presents a different aspect. To such, these subsequent events are essential to Christianity. The resurrection was of the very essence of Christ's redeeming work, being the evidence of His accepted mediation, and the opening of that immortal life which He came to restore to the race for which He had made atonement. It makes His work a gospel, since without it there would

be no reason to believe that He had not lived and died in vain, nor any reversal of the all-conquering law of death. The gift of the Holy Ghost was also needed to give that spiritual illumination which was as necessary to the beginning of the Gospel's spread as to its continuance. So the Church could not be founded until these events had taken place, of which it was to preach the one in the power given by the other.

It is, then, a superficial error to speak of Christ's founding the Church, as His immediate act, and violates the facts in the case. We can only speak of it during His life as a still future thing which He expressed when He said, "I will build my Church." For He did it mediately; that is, others did it at His command and in this way: during His ministry, He was training selected men, by peculiar intimacy and constant instruction, for such a future task; but chiefly did this training take place in the interviews after His resurrection, when, as we are told, He taught them regarding the Kingdom of God, for even the preceding years of intercourse could not have prepared them adequately for such a work. But when the series of events was finished for the perpetuation of which they were to provide, when their training was at last completed, when Christ had finally withdrawn from earth and the Holy Ghost came upon them, then these men, called the Apostles, founded the Church in accordance with the instructions received.

This is what we mean by saying that we believe in the Apostolic Church. We mean that the true and real Church is that planted and shaped by these men appointed thereto; that, on the one hand, we recognize as normal no Christianity modeled upon any antecedent state of affairs, nor, on the other, can we recognize as lawful any Christianity that has arisen since. To us, that is the Church which derives its origin from the apostolic action, and is in continuous organic succession from it. It follows, of course, that the Church must retain the character and form given it by these commissioned men; that, just as that stream of Church life which is legitimate must come from the apostolic source, so any departure thence is a departure from the foundation laid by the only men ever authorized to formulate the belief or the institutions of Christianity. No one since has ever had the authority or the capacity to do this.

Now, what is this apostolic Christianity, to which we are to conform, and whence alone we can trace any valid ecclesiastical pedigree?

We have not time, nor is it necessary to the scope to which we limit ourselves, to define this in detail. All that is proposed is, to seek its polity and its creed; about which are the principal divergencies between Christians at present, and which also really cover other points that may not at first seem to be involved.

But, before proceeding, one broad issue must

be met. It will be affirmed by many that apostolic Christianity is that which is laid down in apostolic writings, or that the New Testament is the only source of learning about it, so that we are shut up to its pages for the features that are to mark the Church. We have already referred to this principle, which is the Puritan position, though it is rarely applied with consistency; for not only do they who claim it adhere to important features which cannot be found explicitly in the New Testament, but furthermore it is impossible to adhere to it under the changing conditions of succeeding ages.

For instance, to apply it rigidly would, on the one hand, condemn those who fail to observe such practices as the kiss of peace, the agape, or love-feast before the Holy Communion, the anointing of the sick, and other customs still. These were clearly practiced in apostolic times, according to the New Testament, and, if complete conformity to its statements is essential, consistency would require that all who advocate this principle should resume them. On the other hand, the rigid application of this rule would exclude customs adhered to by those who claim to follow it. Take, for instance, the practices of observing Sunday instead of Saturday; of baptizing infants; of having services that are conducted with sermon, prayers, and hymns, without the Lord's Supper; and the admission of women to the Communion. These are by no means

plainly inculcated in the New Testament. Large bodies of Christians, who claim to be Bible Christians, reject one or more of them, which shows that the matter cannot be settled on such authority alone, and that any warrant for these customs must rest upon some other argument than Biblical precept. On the other hand, no body of Christians either accepts or rejects them all. Each body makes a selection such as suits it, thereby resorting to some other criterion than that of the letter of the Bible. The only sect that approaches consistency is that of the Seventh Day Baptists, which gives up infant baptism and also Sunday observance. Others not only cling to these, but also to other practices that have no stronger warrant in the Scripture pages.

The relation of the New Testament to these practices will be seen when we come to speak of the place of the Bible, but now we see that it is not such as some maintain, — the only source of deciding what is the fullness of apostolic Christianity.

Nor should we expect it to be so. Consider two facts. One is the origin of the New Testament. It is composed of letters, or books, written by Apostles or their pupils after the Church had been founded by oral teaching. They were written during a period extending from twenty to seventy years subsequent to our Lord's Ascension, for the purpose of instructing particular

churches or persons regarding points that needed special treatment. Therefore it could not be expected that they should explicitly contain everything that the Apostles wished to be remembered of all that they had taught in their preaching. Correspondence is meant to treat particular topics, not to include everything in the mind of the writer, however important.

Again, consider this. The whole Church was in its missionary stage, but some parts were peculiarly undeveloped, so that, even so far as passages in the New Testament are descriptive of the condition of affairs at the time, they cannot be shown to imply that this condition is to be regarded as final. This would be like affirming that, from a letter of a missionary to some recent converts to-day, we could infer that the condition it indicated is the full realization of his teaching.

All this shows that, in order to get a complete idea of the principles and practices of apostolic Christianity, we must add other data to the explicit statements that we find in the New Testament writings. Such are the hints or implications which are contained in them, and which will often lead to unexpected results as regards some people; as for instance those that relate to principles of ritual and government. Again, we must add the evidences of apostolic teachings afforded by the literature and institutions of the early Church, which cannot be explained away on

the theory of corrupt or willful additions, since we find them in existence too generally and too soon for such a supposition to be reasonable. The fruit of a tree is involved in the idea of the tree, and so a feature found in churches taught by apostolic men as soon as they take shape, must in all reason be regarded as having been intended by these men to be a factor in the Church as they would have it develop.

This is the position of the Church of history, the Church to which we belong, and our warrant for the peculiarities that mark us, over against the bodies of fellow-Christians that differ from us. We claim, and, did the limits of this lecture permit, the claim would be substantiated, that our ways and principles are in conformity with that picture of the Apostolic Church which is gained from all the data in our possession. We do not claim, that is, that we know no source for guidance here but the written Scriptures. We believe we have other sources, which do not conflict with Biblical indications, but are harmonious with them. As has been said, our opponents all act upon the same principle in this or that respect. We only claim to be consistent, and to extend the principle in a reasonable way, and to a proper degree.

But we may now dwell upon only the more fundamental features of that Apostolic Christianity by which the Gospel received from Christ was to be perpetuated through the ages to come.

These are, the organization of Christians in a Church for the promotion of the Gospel and of mutual edification, with the right to legislate to these ends as expediency should demand, united by a ministry perpetuated through its highest order, and on the basis of a creed of accepted gospel facts. The Roman Catholic adds submission to the Pope as an element of the Apostolic Church, the argument being that such has been the growth of Christianity. The reply is, that it has been the growth in that part of Christendom under that particular see, and unknown elsewhere; therefore it is as local and as uncatholic as the Congregationalism of New England or the Presbyterianism of Scotland; and those now addressed are supposed to need no refutation of its claims.

Until recently, it was not disputed that the Church is organized and united through its ministry. But, about two hundred years ago, there arose in England a view which has obtained some currency in that country and America, being the theory of the Congregationalists, Unitarians, Universalists, and Baptists, often modified, however, in practice. This position, so new and so local in Christendom, is that in the Church the only general bond of union is that invisible, and undoubtedly supreme one, of common relationship to Christ; that the only organization is that of each several congregation, which has the power of appointing the ministry, and can be

subjected to no other laws than its own. This is the theory of Independency, or so-called Congregationalism, directly traversing the position held by all the rest of Christendom in all ages.

The arguments for it are substantially two: namely, that the nature of Christianity requires exemption from laws and rules, allows only a spiritual brotherhood; and that passages in the New Testament show, as for instance at Corinth, a state of affairs of this sort. To these arguments we reply, in general, that the former assumes an idea of Christianity which may well be scrutinized; and that the latter assumes a certain condition to be normal which perhaps was not. But it were best to advance the positive arguments for the organic view, which has the presumption in its favor as the undeviating practice until this new view arose, and is the prevailing one still.

In the first place, whatever may be said of some cases, we find others in the New Testament where organic unity under Apostolic regimen is clear. We find the Church to be more and more, as the years go on which the New Testament covers, a brotherhood that is ruled and ordered, each congregation being united with the whole body, and the ministry being qualified by others than the worshipers, that is, by Apostles, or those whom they selected as their agents.

But this is all made the plainer by the fact that, as soon as we find Christendom in shape and at

work, when we have many sources of information, it is found to be organized in this way; and Independency, if it had ever existed anywhere, has entirely disappeared. It may be said that this was the result of a defection from original simplicity. But this is too much for us to believe. We might find such a supposition plausible after the lapse of a more protracted time, but it is not to be accepted as a reasonable explanation of a state of affairs that is universal within twenty or thirty years of St. John's lifetime, or less than a century after Pentecost. It implies a rapidity of corruption which there is no reason to believe in, which is contradicted by all the facts; and a revolution so complete that it could not have become supreme, as it did, without awakening any protest in any land or place. That which was an undisputed rule at this time seems to us, beyond debate by intelligent men, the indication of the known wish and teaching of Apostolic men.

Again, the question is settled by the object of the foundation of the Church. It was established to preach the Gospel, as well as to perpetuate the means of edifying believers, or the means of grace. But this demands concerted action, and that means organization. It is difficult to believe that those founders should have given such a commission to their converts, and then left them incohesive, with no capacity for united action, no order of men to provide for the foundation of new congregations.

The fact is, that this theory only thinks of the ministry as a means of edifying a Christianity already in existence. It was invented in such conditions where it was not called upon to submit to the test of the Church's essential work. It is inconceivable how, on such a basis, the faith of that England where it arose could have come into being, or how the Church would ever have spread beyond the walls of the cities that Apostles visited. A Christianity thus begun would have had but the temporary life of certain local assemblies, which would soon have died out, leaving the memory of an abortive movement that had no machinery for its own perpetuation.

This is confirmed by the practice of these very Independents when they would act upon the unbelieving world. In that grandly successful missionary work that their warm hearts have prosecuted, they have had to abandon their own principle. Apart from any question of the needed degree of organization at home to prosecute the work, as soon as they found a mission, with its one or more stations, they proceed to organize it, of very necessity, with a ruling and self-perpetuating ministry. They cannot leave these congregations to be isolated or autonomous, nor can they leave to each one the erection of its own ministry. So they unite them, have common legislative bodies, approve and qualify the clergy by clergymen, thus doing exactly what the old Church has done. This would seem to show

that it is the very law of the life of Christianity that for its work there must be organized union, and a directing ministry that passes upon the fitness, and confers the title, of those who seek to enter its ranks. Anything that is thus the law of the life of Christianity is a part of it, and must have been in intent, as all our data show it was in fact, and as the Church has ever said it was, the teaching of the Apostles.

But this is not all. The Church is found, at a time when it could only have been due to Apostolic origin, legislating in regard to its ritual and customs and ordinances, and doing so with the expectation that such rules should be obeyed. That is, the ideal Church has the right to regulate its life according to indications of expediency. This is denied by those who say that nothing is binding which is not laid down in Scripture. But that is not only an absurdity for a society that was founded to work in all times and all places ; it is that bondage which St. Paul had to rebuke as the leaven of Judaism, the return from the New Testament to the Old, imparting into the New what is not there, but is in the Pentateuch only, minute directions for all things. It is one of the curiosities of human eccentricity that they who say so much about liberty in Christ, and assail us Churchmen as victims to legalism, base their whole argument and action upon that very principle, and deny to Christendom the freedom to legislate for its

needs. For this is Christian liberty, the right to adapt measures to emergencies, under the guidance of God; and it carries with it the duty of the individual to submit, unless he can say that any law is against the written word of God.

But it may be added, as regards this question of liberty, that it is as impossible under the Independent theory as under that pure democracy that it imitates in the state. Liberty means protection of rights, safeguards against temporary or local tyrannies, and this can only come with constitutional forms, which in turn come with concerted organization and established order. An unorganized Christianity might be endurable if all Christians were saints. It would be intolerable as they are, intolerable to the laity, and utterly so to the ministry, as so many are finding out; who either modify this Independency while nominally adhering to it, or leave it for the generous shelter of such a condition as the usual form of Christianity affords. "The liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" is not found where numbers rule immediately, where transient majorities produce the most galling tyrannies; but it is only found, if at all, where settled principles, recognized rights, and organic forms of law, in church or state, can be appealed to and enforced against the local or widespread despotisms of the hour.

For reasons thus given, all but a slight fraction of Christendom has lived without the suggestion

of so crippling an idea as the erratic and provincial principle of Independency. But, while all the Church with this exception holds to organization perpetuated through its ministry, there is a part of Protestantism which holds to a theory that it is perpetuated through the Presbyters, than whom it is claimed that no higher officer is allowable. This is Presbyterianism, or the polity of the Protestants in some countries, — France, Switzerland, the Rhinelands, and Scotland, as well as those among us who are connected with them. To it, the general usage of Christendom replies that there was established in the Apostolic Church a higher office, called the Episcopate, to which alone is committed the prerogative of ordaining. Both sides, let it be noted, hold to the "Apostolic Succession." That is a term criticised as often ignorantly as intelligently. It really means only this, that the order of ministers in the Church does not and cannot begin by any one taking the ministry upon himself, or by any layman giving it to him, as Independency holds ; but was begun by the Apostles appointing the first ministers, who appointed their successors in turn. That is, the ministry, rightly and truly, is a succession of a corporation, or clerical body, in the Church, initiated by the Apostles. Now, the Presbyterian theory, of course, involves this when it says that only presbyters can make presbyters, and that laymen cannot. But it differs from the usual position of

Christendom in denying that this succession is to be kept up through ordination by bishops.

Our reasons for holding to this are, first, that the principle is, we believe, found in the Apostolic writings. We find there, not that any ministers could ordain, but only designated and qualified ones. If it is said that this interpretation is not clear, we then add that it is made so to us by what we find to be the rule of the primitive Christians. As soon as we find a local church equipped in any land, it has a bishop. As, one by one, the various parts of Christendom come out of the misty days of their origin, and have a literature and institutions, they are all found with this office, to which ordaining and ruling are restricted. It is the only kind of ministry known in those days when the voices of men like John and Paul and Peter were hardly still.

This is explained by some as being only a growth. Suppose it was so. Does not the growth of a tree show the intention of the tree? If it bear apples, then it was planted to bear apples; and so, if the Church developed into Episcopacy, it must have been so shaped that it would. The only alternative is to say that Episcopacy is a corrupt growth, a violation of the Apostolic intention. This is to us inadmissible, for two reasons: on the one hand, we do not see any warrant for accusing those Christians of falling into a corruption so general and so notable in less than half a century after St. John's

death; and on the other, it would have been not only a corruption, but a revolution; which, as has been said regarding organization, cannot reasonably be believed to have taken place with no known resistance, no recorded appeal from it. So devoted and so widely extended a body of men, as Christians were then, do not become subjects of an unwarranted usurpation, which Episcopacy was, if not of original intention.

However, whether a growth, or wholly or in part an imposition by Apostolic authority, Episcopacy is the law of the Church's life as much as organization is. Suppose any outsider were asked this question, What is the peculiarity of the Christian ministry, as distinct from that of the Jews or Mohammedans or any other religious system, when all its extent is considered? Would he not have to reply that its peculiarity is that it has bishops? The exceptions are too local and temporary to affect the fact that such has been the historical characteristic of the Christian ministry. But beyond this, in another sense, it is the law of the Church's life. It is necessary to efficiency. Just as it is difficult to see how Christianity could have survived its foundation if not organized, so is it difficult to see how it could have been spread without any appointing and directing office. "What is everybody's business is nobody's business" is as true in religious as in other matters. And it has never been spread save on this principle. Even they who deny it,

or its extreme application, come back to it when they appoint superintendents of districts, or directors of missionary work, — that is, set clergymen over clergymen. The most signal instance is that of the great Methodist body, whose noble work for Christ has been efficient because of what its originators saw to be necessary, — superior and ordaining officers, whom they call bishops, though others who do the same thing do not use the term. The difference between our idea of Episcopacy, as a supervising order, and theirs, is that we hold that these officers can only be appointed by those of the same rank, who have power to do so, derived in succession from the Apostolic source of the ministry as the only adequate one. They hold that this order can be created at any time without that condition ; that is, that "the greater can be blessed of the less," the superior commissioned by the inferior, which to us seems illogical and inconsistent.

So far we have seen that the Apostolic idea of the Church is that of an organization united by a ministry perpetuated from Apostolic initiation through an order set apart for the purpose. If this is so, then to that idea we should conform, in that succession we should be, such a ministry we should have.

But how is it with those Christians that are not so situated? Here we meet a perennial and a much-vexed question. It is important, and candor will not allow it to be ignored. Nor is it

right to do so when we know how many saintly lives are lived under other forms of Christian polity, how great and unsurpassed a work their adherents have done for God's glory and for man's welfare. In this land, as far as visible effects go, that work is beyond what has been done by those who adhere to the Apostolic principle, as we have defined it.

Now, on the one hand, it will not do to say that this is a matter of no consequence. A newly originated body, due to merely human action, cannot occupy the same position as one that traces its organic life back to the action of inspired Apostles at Pentecost; nor can departure from a divine standard ever be a matter of indifference. So, if this idea of the Church's organization is the norm, only the superficial can say that we might as well not have bishops as have them. If it is the wish of Christ, learned through the Apostolic action, there must be a reason for Episcopacy. As a distinguished recent defender of the new departure has said, it was "a revolution" when some Protestants gave it up; and a revolution, however justifiable when necessary, means, at the best, that which should not have been, if avoidable.

Yet, while ethics forbid us to admit that this departure is a matter of no consequence, before we can tell what the consequences are we must take into consideration some important facts.

First, we must ascertain how far we know the

object and value of this normal form of ministry. Unless we know exactly all its functions, and all that depends upon it, we cannot tell what is lacking where it is absent. Surely, we must not hastily claim to know this. Only God knows all the reasons for anything He does, and therefore no one of us can tell exhaustively what He makes dependent upon the matter of polity, and what He does not.

Again, we need to consider the reasons for departure from the norm, and to give to them their proper weight. Revolution is sometimes clearly justifiable; and so, in the circumstances of any revolt against established order, there may be an element of justifiability in God's sight. Perhaps the order revolted against has to bear some of the blame in the matter, if blame there be.

Still further, we must consider how far the history of such bodies may have vindicated their right to exist. They who have saved many souls and evangelized a land are not to be set aside as having no standing in court. Again, we must look at them in the light of the saints that hallow their history, of the men among them who, whether ordained or not, are yet prophets of God, in the light of their success in doing just what the Church was sent to do; and in that of the favor of God, when He has, as St. Peter says, "given unto them the Holy Ghost, as well as unto us."

Now, in presence of these and still other con-

siderations that might be adduced, we cannot, so summarily as some imagine, define the results of that departure, which is so prevalent about us, from the regular polity of the Church. But all this includes a wider truth, that we can never determine the results of departure from any norm set forth by God or Christ, or the Apostles. The fact is that life is wider than logic, and that we cannot mete out condemnation or praise by a process of syllogisms. There are too many unknown factors, too many indeterminate ones, in any problem of human conduct, for us to reduce it to terms of mathematical precision. We can only make positive affirmations of what should be. We cannot define the consequences of the disregard thereof. For instance, as to the very fundamental matter of belief in Christ, the wisest and soundest differ as to the results of its absence in the cases of heathen, or ignorant or blinded men. How absurd, then, to dogmatize, as so many Christians do, in respect to the consequences of disregard of some ordinance or custom! All of us must learn to see that in fact we know nothing about negatives. The message of Christianity is to say what will happen if certain conditions are met, not to define what will happen if they are not. The Church is like a herald sent to announce good news. It is not commissioned to announce the results of not heeding it in any particular case. It cannot do this, since in each case the decision turns upon

facts known only to "God who searcheth the heart."

Thus has the Church spoken, and thus does our branch of it speak. The creeds only make positive statements: they make no reference to alternatives; and the other standards only say what we believe to be right and true and normal. Consequently, any Churchman who knows the spirit and letter of his Church will, by his strongest affirmations, mean only to say what he believes to be the ideal, and will not presume to be wiser than the Church by defining the degree of loss incurred by those who revolt against any rule, or dispense with any ordinance, or deny any tenet. It is for no one less than God to settle that: no one less can do it; and He may know of reasons for approval when we should condemn, or of condemnation when we might approve. "Many that are last shall be first, and the first last." So, our claim can only be, that we stand in this land for a form of Church life which is that of a fully equipped Christianity. We dare not say, for we have no authority for it in the Church's utterances, that we stand for an absolute condition of the divine favor. But we do say that we stand for what is necessary to ecclesiastical efficiency and completeness. We believe in adhering to the ideal, since we can; and we mean to do so, convinced that, whether we know its value or not, it is the safe and the obligatory way; and for the sake of this principle,

and not out of narrowness, we cannot compromise this position, nor lower our standard.

Passing over other elements in the Apostolic norm, as not so disputed, we now come to the basis of confessional union which it sets forth. We believe it to be, in conformity with our previous definition of Christianity, union upon a creed of facts. We have seen how this is necessary to make our faith a Gospel. Let us now see how it is necessary to any union among believers.

Creeds arose from the necessity of defining the Gospel which the Church preaches. Originally, it was stated in the baptismal formula. That God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is the Good News. But dissensions and errors called for more definiteness if there was to be any real harmony. It is ever so. Yet here we must distinguish.

It has been held, and generally is held around us, that this amplification of the baptismal requirement must be a detailing of doctrinal definitions. This is so deeply ingrained in the minds both of believers and of unbelievers that it is difficult to make it clear how undesirable, how un-apostolic it is, and how different is the position of those who repudiate it.

Its prevalence is due to the prevalence of the idea at the bottom of sectarianism. That is the idea of which we spoke when dealing with the nature of Christianity, namely, the exaggera-

tion of the importance of correctness of opinion ; and an equally prevalent conception that this is attainable, and therefore obligatory. It has led to the idea that a Christian ought to hold faultless doctrines, or correct inferences from the faith once delivered, and that believers must be united in that manner. Hence arose sects or bodies of believers who thought that they had reached ultimate correctness upon this or that point ; and who, because the Church around would not accept its formulas, set up their own tabernacles, formed their own societies, to protect and advocate these peculiar tenets. Of course, each one devised its own creed, to form the basis of its peculiar membership as the body that held the true message of Christianity to the world. This same process has also worked in churches, or ancient and national organizations, which, in measure as they follow it, assume the sect position. This is the case eminently with Rome, whose creed and catechism are elaborately doctrinal, and consist of theological propositions that define its particular dogmas. This process has been so general that it has come to be usually regarded as the law of religious organization, the justification of separations among Christians. It has led friends and foes to think that Christendom is, and should be, committed to the principle of unity in opinion among those who worship together.

But there is about this position the insuper-

able difficulty that it makes catholicity impossible. Men will not agree in opinion. That is evident, and it is not wrong. Since God has constituted us differently in respect of mental powers and characteristics, we cannot be expected either to look at admitted facts in the same way, or equally to emphasize different elements in a common belief. This latter is perhaps the most fruitful source of variations in opinion, and it simply cannot be avoided; for men are so made that one will attach more importance to this factor, another to that, in a Christianity that all may hold alike.

And beyond this, the principle of agreement in doctrinal confessions not only renders catholicity impossible at any given time, but also prevents it in succeeding generations. Christians surely make progress in their doctrines, or their apprehensions of their faith, with advance in education and spiritual life; and what is thus true of an individual is just as true of the whole body of believers. So, on the basis of doctrinal definitions being the bond of unity, the Church would be resolved into a series of rising and falling bodies; for, if they who believe could agree at any one time, still there would be, of necessity, a process of successive dissolutions and reformations. No union formed on that principle can outlive the prevalence of transient phases of religious thought. This is the reason why no sect can endure, for a sect means an organization

based on agreement in some local and temporary notion.

But all this should not be. We should expect that one essential feature of the Church would be catholicity. Surely Christ meant His discipleship for all sorts and conditions of men and for all the ages. Then we should expect that the basis of union would be acceptance of His Gospel, independently of differences as to emphasis of its parts, or as to inborn tendencies in its apprehension. There would seem to be no reason why they should not worship together, and use the same ordinances, who accept Him and His work, though they may vary in opinion. To put this concretely, some men will always make more of God's sovereignty, others more of man's freedom. Some will make more of subjective religion, others of its outward aspects. Some will emphasize the personal element, others the institutional. Some will make more of feeling, others of action or conduct, others still of intelligence. The divisions have usually occurred on matters like these, and so Christianity has been broken up. But certainly there is no more warrant for destroying its unity because of such differences than there would be for dividing the state because of differences of parties, or the family because of varieties of opinion there. In one case as in the other, comprehensiveness would seem possible and necessary.

And likewise should the Church be catholic

in successive stages of progress. It ought to be a body which could continue to proclaim one message of Christ and His Apostles from century to century, and join in one changeless confession, without dissolution when fuller thought should come, or new glimpses of the meaning of the Gospel; a body that should have room for, and be adaptable to, larger and deeper realizations of what is meant in the Gospel of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; a body which could live on without any necessity of disintegration and reconstitution, as the Spirit leads its members more and more into the truth. But this is impossible if you insist that the confessional unity among Christians shall be on the basis of a common explanation of the gospel facts, or of an agreement upon theories of that redemption in which we all believe.

But it is possible if based on a confession of facts in which all can agree, though they differ in doctrines; and that this is the idea of the Church, that Apostles so preached Christianity, and that Paul so summed up the Gospel, we have seen in our second lecture. Let it now suffice to add a few more words. As we have seen, it soon became apparent that converts, as well as others, needed some closer statement of the facts of the Gospel than only the baptismal formula, and since, because of local influences, one place called for one detail, another for another, many creeds arose. Yet all were short, and merely

statements of simple verities regarding Christ's work. But a process of unification speedily began, and at length all Christians came to unite upon that statement which we call the Apostles' Creed, which was expanded into the so-called Nicene, as an enumeration of facts in which, without imposing any explanations of them, the Church united as the embodiment of the Christianity taught by Apostles, and to be held in all lands and ages. Upon it believers have been agreed ever since, with unimportant exceptions. In its place there can be none other devised. There is a good deal said about new creeds. Many cry for them. A distinguished man has said there should be a new one every seven years. This is all based upon the idea that creeds for Christians are to express their opinions about the Gospel. In that case, of course, a new one would be needed, not only for every day that a new light comes, but for every new Christian made. But to a creed of the facts of Christianity there can be no additions, in it no change; for, while our apprehension of these facts may be enlarged, they remain changeless. If, as the Church founded by Apostles holds, these creeds which it has used for ages are a true summary of Christianity, then they will suffice to the end of that Church's history, for Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

It is true, we are speaking of an ideal that has

been rarely realized, if at all, since long-distant days. Yet it is the ideal set forth by Apostles, and it is of value to show what it is, as aiding us in our search for an ecclesiastical home in a divided Christianity. We believe that our own Church meets the norm thus presented, and that it alone thus conforms to the Apostolic intention, owing to the kind Providence of God.

For baptism or admission to Church membership, it only asks assent to that confession which is an epitome of the gospel facts; and surely a Church's idea of essentials may be found in what admits to its privileges. For the supreme privilege of the Holy Communion it is still the same, except that they who come to it are expected to be able to join in the fuller statement of the Nicene Creed, which adds nothing to the other. To show still further how the matter is regarded, we are told only that excommunication, or exclusion from Church privileges, is to be visited upon evil livers and unforgiving persons. That is, it only punishes moral error, not mental mistakes. As long as one lives consistently, joins in the service, and in the confession of the verities held to constitute the Gospel, he cannot be touched for his differences of opinion from others on any point.

Now this is significant enough to detain us a moment, for it shows the position of our Church as to what should be the ground of separation, if separation there must be. It is not disagree-

ment in convictions, as has usually been maintained, but sinful and unworthy conduct. The former principle has led to the exclusion from privileges and to the persecution of many who adorned the Gospel of God our Saviour by their lives, and broken up the fellowship of those who had in common "the mind which was in Christ Jesus;" while it has also led to tolerating and honoring as many who were utterly unworthy, simply because of their zeal for an imagined orthodoxy. Not that errors of opinion are underestimated by us, but they are not regarded as so serious as errors of life. That is, vagaries of belief on the part of sincere followers of Christ are not to be allowed to sever ties half as soon as cruelty, or sordidness, or dishonesty, or meanness, or untruthfulness, in those who only are His followers in profession. Is not this, the position of our Church, the true one, the one Christ would have taken? Is it not the way in which Apostles looked at the matter? See how the Christians of their day were divided. They were far more divided than Christians are now. They disagreed as to circumcision, and Sabbath observance, and many other fundamental points of ceremonial. They disagreed as to very important doctrines, and even as to St. Paul's Apostleship. Yet they lived together. They that erred in opinion were instructed; but it was they who sinned, as the man in Corinth, who alone were excluded from communion and fellowship. That

is, the practice of the Church at that time shows that, in an Apostolic Church and in a Scriptural Church, immorality is the fundamental reason for the rupture of brotherly relations; that "Bible Christians," as some call themselves, have no warrant in their own position for their schisms and their separations; and that the New Testament idea of comprehensiveness of opinion is wider than they seem ever to remember, wider indeed than Christians at the present day seem able to attain in practice. Would that Christians had always remembered this, and instead of separating from others because of their dissent from this or that doctrine, or their different estimate of this or that ordinance, had been ever willing to kneel side by side with those who held the same Gospel and used the same means of grace, allowing only sin and enmity, that is, moral heresy, to be a bar to fellowship and sympathy!

As to the Thirty-nine Articles, which may be thought to contradict this assertion in regard to the position of this Church, suffice it to say that they are not terms of membership or conditions of privilege. They are only for the clergy in their work as teachers. They are to guide them in their utterances, to mark limits that individual opinion is not to transcend, and are also their protection against the tyranny of waves of local or temporary opinion. Beyond this, they can be changed at any time. Instead of being doctrinal

creeds, they are not creeds at all; are never recited; are not part of the Prayer Book, but of the Ordinal; and are no more the Church's confession than they are its message. They are transient regulations for our ministry in their instruction.

This is the reason why we believe that the position that we occupy is the only possible basis of Christian union. There is a healthy desire for a cessation of divisions among those who are so really one in spirit and in faith. Our Church, through its chief pastors, has set forth its idea of reunion, as based upon these two features of Apostolic Christianity, — the normal form of the ministry, and agreement in the ancient creeds. We do not mean to say that all must be swallowed up by us, as some think; but that as to polity, if there is to be organic union, it can only be upon common acceptance of the old ways. This would seem obvious, since no general agreement can be expected upon any newer or any local form. But what lies back of that, and is more important, because more fundamental, is that unity can only be upon an agreement of confession as to the Gospel, of which these creeds are the only general and undisputed statement. Any other agreement is impossible and not to be desired, for it would mean suppression of convictions, and ignoring of unavoidable differences. But all Christians can agree upon the facts of the Gospel. All bodies, or all

important ones, do hold them in common. And there is no reason why they should not come together upon them, agreeing to disagree on minor matters, and loving each other none the less. This will be the first great step; after that we think that organic union should ensue in common acceptance of the ancient and original ministry, against which some have revolted for reasons which, as we think, no longer hold good, however cogent they may once have been.

Whether this will happen, however, we know not. It is hardly to be expected, in view of the tenacity of human opinions, the strength of many bodies, and other difficulties that arise. Yet, whether it happens or not, this is our mission in this land, as we are persuaded, to represent and commend the normal regimen and creed of Apostolic Christianity. Others have a great work behind them, and are doing a great work now. But we believe it our duty to adhere to our position of upholding, not only the full equipment of a Church, but also that manner of agreement among followers of the Lord Jesus Christ which alone was intended in the Church, is the only hope of the reunion of true followers of the Saviour, and the only way in which one Gospel can be preached to all sorts and conditions of men.

Stand up bravely for this, the idea of the Church. It is not always understood. Many within the Church fail to understand the nature

of their union and the fullness of their freedom. They, too, seem to think that all must agree. They want all to hold their particular shibboleths, belong to their especial party. But this is akin to wishing that all citizens be compelled to be Democrats or Republicans, which is a sin against the idea of the state. Yet it is no more absurd than the endeavor to make all in the Church of one school of thought. Unity is only feasible upon common institutions and undisputed facts, outside of which are allowed wide divergencies. Let no one narrow this liberty. Resist all who would narrow it, whatever be the ground they take. While all others are free to look at things in their own way, each is as free in his way; and the Church and all its ways and the creeds belong to each as much as to all. Among those who use them and are loyal to them, no one has the prerogative of judging or setting up a standard for another. Repudiate such an attempt as a tyranny that violates Church principles.

But especially is this peculiarity of our Church misapprehended by those without. They cannot understand how we, High Churchmen and Low Churchmen and Broad Churchmen, can sincerely regard each other as brothers. They do not believe we are really united, and think us uncandid, or indifferent to great principles. Outsiders ask: "How can you expect us to come to you as a relief for our divisions? Settle your own differences first." To which the Churchman

answers: "We do not propose to settle our differences. It is our glory that we can be brethren and work together without obliterating them. What we hold in common unites us. What we differ upon does not separate us." It is sometimes trying to us if some brother Churchman is carried away by what seems, to the general sentiment of our communion, to be superstitious or rationalistic; and our principle is undoubtedly put to severe tests. But men who are trustworthy and devoted, living but to do Christ's work, we cannot exclude from our sympathy. What is far more trying, and tests more violently the bond of unity, is such things as deceitfulness or bigotry or self-righteousness. These, to a true Churchman, cause the most regret, the strongest aversion, and exert a repulsion stronger than any party ties or theological lines can overcome. He who looks at the question in this way will find that it is no disadvantage, as some imagine, but is on the contrary a satisfaction, to be in a Church where issues, on which so many elsewhere separate, cause no divisions among true followers of the one Lord; where deep questions that are closed elsewhere are regarded as open to study; and where we can not only hold fellowship with diverse Christian minds as well as with kindred ones, but also can peaceably discuss great themes in allowable controversy. So it is that we, of all shades of thought, holding to all forms of opinion, widely differing on deep things,

can yet live and worship and work in the unity of a common creed, and can in sincerity, as without enmity, join in the same Supper of the Lord, in the same hymns of praise. We would not have all think alike, nor require silence upon matters that are open, within the Church's limits; for by so doing we should lose many whose fellowship we prize, suppress many a mental activity that enriches piety, and secure uniformity only by a process of impoverishment.

What do you agree in, then? is asked. We agree in that which is enough to bind any men together, in that which has bound the Church together through the ages in the common creed of Christendom. This question was once asked at a discussion among some clergymen and laymen of the Church of England when wide divergence was displayed among the former. At length a layman said, "How can you expect us of the laity to heed you when you are so much at variance? Do you ministers of the Church agree in anything? If so, on what are you really united? What do you believe?" Then up rose that great prophet, Frederick Denison Maurice, and impetuously but solemnly said: "We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into Hell; the third day He rose

again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. We believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; the Resurrection of the body; and the Life everlasting."

And this answer, which was sufficient for that inquirer, is sufficient answer to whomsoever asks us for what we, who differ on so many points, hold in common. It is that Gospel in which we are one, and in which all may be one; the sufficient summary of what Apostles founded the Church to confess and to preach to every creature; sufficient to guide and to sustain us as we walk by faith and not by sight in "the way that leadeth unto life."

LECTURE VI.

WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: to Him be glory." — 2 *Pet.* iii. 18.

THE Church of Christ has a twofold duty to fulfill. On the one hand is its practical duty: to spread the Gospel through the world, and build up the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men. On the other is its intellectual duty: to apprehend more and more fully the wealth that is in that Gospel, to gain a deeper insight into the significance of the facts that constitute it. This is Theology.

It is not the aim of this lecture to teach Theology, which is a subject not only too extensive, but also one that can hardly be expected to receive in detail the attention of those addressed, since it requires a training and a study that can only be looked for in those who are especially called thereto. The laity may be, but need not be, theologians in this Church to which we belong. The reasons for this will be manifest as we proceed.

But the purpose of this lecture is to state what Theology is, its nature, its aim, and its achieve-

ments, as well as possible within the limits at our command. In so doing, we must recur again to the truth dwelt upon in defining Christianity, for, as was then said, all other topics are affected by that definition. We saw that Christianity is a collection of facts, and that faith is resting upon them. Now it is to be expected that men, constituted as they are, would endeavor to understand these facts which were committed to the Church for proclamation by the Apostolic men who founded it. The mere power of curiosity, the desire for intelligent faith and clearer knowledge, would make this certain to occur. They who would oppose this desire only fight against the wind. Men will not cease to inquire, and though some may, in unnecessary despair, say that it is of no use, and others, in a spirit of skepticism, that it is dealing but with words or dreams; the Christian will ever strive after a full and systematic understanding of his faith, not from mere curiosity, for this inquiry will always be pushed, as it always has been, from a higher motive, — from duty. A sense of duty has been at the bottom of all theological labor in the earnest and holy minds of the past. And this duty is twofold. In the first place, it is a duty, for God's sake, to fathom more deeply the revelation in Christ. This is a treasure to be prized and all its beauty known. If it be a disclosure of God and His ways, honor to Him requires us to learn all that

it can tell us. In the second place, the proper preaching of the Gospel demands the study of Theology. That preaching must be as clear and as harmonious as possible, made adaptable to varied minds and ages, fitted for those of advanced, as well as those of undeveloped stages of culture. But this means that the Gospel, to be thus proclaimed, must be thought upon, its factors developed by reflection, its implications discovered by investigation.

Therefore, in any event, this study of the verities of the faith would have been obligatory. Whatever the career of the Church, however normal or unruffled, still the very inherent spirit of Christianity would have led of necessity to theological inquiry.

But the history of the Church has not been normal. It has been a history of conflict without and within; of antagonism with those who have rejected it, and of peril at the hands of those who have misinterpreted it. The faith has needed defining for its protection, and the exercise of solicitude to avert corruptions, whether by denial of the true, or by addition of the false. This means laborious study. No one's opinion who has not considered the matter in issue is of value on any subject. The study of theology has been the effort to protect and expound those Christian verities which are "the power of God unto salvation." Christian thinking and living — for living is based upon thinking — have gone astray, far

enough and often enough, and perhaps theological effort has at times done the same; but who can tell how far this wandering would have gone if there had been no Theology? This is, then, the intellectual task of the Church, as distinct from its practical one, a work parallel and concurrent with its labor in the world and in the hearts of men; and it is not surprising that, as in these other respects, so in this one, the work has not been perfectly done. Yet who will say that it were better had none of these tasks been undertaken?

In approaching the theme, there comes at once before our minds the vastness of the field denoted by the word "Theology." Its literature is of such extent that it is almost appalling. It probably exceeds that of any other department of human activity. For ages it was almost the only literature produced. To-day it is that branch to which more volumes are annually added than to any other. Some tell us that religion is dying out, and that interest in it is on the wane. It does not look so, when we see the proportion of work done by the printing-press in its behalf in every land.

This literature may be divided into several great departments. These are: Exegetical Theology, which deals with the documents of Christianity; Historical, which deals with its preparation and its career; Practical, which treats of the application of it, including the pastoral work and

worship; Evidential, or that which defends and vindicates the faith; and Doctrinal, or that which discusses its tenets. This last is what is usually meant by the term Theology, and is often called Systematic Divinity or Dogmatic Theology. In this department, also, the work achieved has been the most extensive, and the most intellectually eminent. There the greatest minds have done their greatest work, and have won an almost peerless distinction. Whatever may be said of other human activity in the realm of thought, or however we may agree with them, such men as Origen and Athanasius, Augustine and Anselm, have few fellows and no superiors. They have dealt with the highest themes to which the mind can address itself; and, however successful we may think the effort, we must admit that its participants have been giants. It has had workers of all schools of thought, and among all sorts of men. It has made serviceable to itself every tongue that has been capable of serving it, every gift that man possesses, every science that he has devised, every art that progress has evolved. Now, what is it all worth? Has all this work been in vain? Is all this literature only of such stuff as dreams are made of? Some tell us so. But perhaps a few words about it may show it to be not so valueless as they suppose; and may also show that it has not all the value that some others may have ascribed to it. For, perhaps the exaggeration of its worth is at the bottom of a good

deal of its depreciation. Let us see just what it is, and so shall we see what it is worth.

Theology is a science. What is a science? It is the work of investigating the facts in the field under consideration, classifying them, and generalizing from them. It is the effort to advance in the real knowledge of things, beyond what mere observation discerns. There are two kinds of sciences. The so-called exact ones deal with precise data and inexorable sequences, and lead, if properly pursued, to sure and necessary conclusions. But, as the word is generally used, it refers to another kind of work altogether, that of the inexact sciences. Their work is the investigation and correlation of data that are not precise, like the axioms of mathematics, but only matters of observation, such as the rocks, the flowers, the animals, or the acts and experiences of men. Now, of course, no observation is complete or precise in any case, nor is any number of observations ever exhaustive. We do not know all about any one flower, and still less about all flowers. Consequently science must be always inexact when it is thus dealing with facts.

Theology is a science of this sort, and just as truly a science as any other on the list. It is the study of the facts in the Christian field, with all the helps available. These are primarily, of course, the Apostolic and other sacred writings whence we chiefly get the data of our study. But this is not all. There are also the Apostolic

traditions and institutions. Then there are the aids of spiritual insight, and of the experience of those who have lived in the light of the facts that are studied. And we also have philosophy in its many forms, history, and other sources still to which we may go. All these are the equipment for this labor to which God calls His people. But the labor has three aims. One is, to gain ever deeper apprehensions of the significance of the verities of the faith. What does it mean that God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? What does it mean that the First creates and cares for us, that the Second saves, and that the Third sanctifies? What does the Forgiveness of Sins mean? What does the promise of Resurrection mean? Such are a few out of countless questions that are raised by the Creed which the Church repeats in every service. Secondly, this science seeks to classify these facts, to show their relations to one another; for any one truth must involve all other truths, and cast light upon them. Third, — and this is the practical object of the science, — it seeks to proclaim or apply these facts, the better to learn their value and their use. Geology or chemistry or anatomy are pursued, or should be, in order to use the results attained for the benefit of mankind and the glory of God. There is no justification of any study unless this is the object. And so Theology has, as its aim, not only the fuller possession of divine truth, but also greater efficiency in bringing that truth to bear upon the hearts and lives of men.

This statement assumes, of course, that we have such facts to work upon ; that the Creed of Christendom, regarding the person and work of Christ, is true.

Our premises may be denied in different ways. There may be, in the first place, a flat repudiation of the reality of the Christian facts. This objection is met by the evidences of Christianity. We have treated this, and have seen that these facts are involved in the reality of Jesus Christ ; for, if real, no one questions His veracity. We have also seen that His reality is, perhaps, the most undeniable event in human history ; not a matter of the remote past, but one in which we and the world are living and moving to-day ; a present, actual factor in our daily life, from the time we get up until we return to our bed, since all about us, and even within us, is what it is because of Christ. We have seen that one might more easily doubt the actuality of any other factor in current affairs than that of Him whose existence and agency all Christendom manifests, whose name is stamped on the brow of our civilization, as far as it is good or elevated.

Again, the denial of our premises may be based upon the *à priori* objections of agnosticism, which says that God cannot communicate any truth to us, or that we could not apprehend it if the effort were made to give it. That is, this denial says *in limine* that, whatever may be the case with the verity of the events we believe in,

there is in them no real knowledge of God, and therefore no real basis for a theological science. Such facts as we claim to have are either utterly imaginary, or else so affected by human limitations and preconceptions as to have no value to argue from. Even if there have been disclosures of the divine disposition and purposes, even if God has sent us communications through Christ, yet they are so modified in the process of their presentation, or so modified in their apprehension by us, that we know not what they are worth.

Of course, if in Christianity "things are not what they seem," then our beliefs are false and there can be no Theology, any more than there can be a science of botany based upon observation through discoloring or distorting lenses. But is this true? To admit it means manifestly the surrender of all we rest upon. If what we call the love and the holiness and the mercy of God are not what those words convey to us, then it is difficult to see any value in them. They are counterfeits, and we have not what we want for our redemption and comfort, nor any actual knowledge of God at all. Then Christianity falls to pieces. Of course all faith must cease; and at last all religion, even mere reverence, goes by the board, for we can hold no relations with an unknown object. But we are hardly prepared for this. It lands us where no one will go, in the position that we know really nothing about anybody or anything: for there is as much reason

to be sure of the correctness of divine facts as of any other ; as much reason to believe that we can know God as that we can know a friend, for the one can reveal Himself to us if the other can. The facts about God are really more, and and not less, certain than those of other sorts ; at any rate they are so to some of us, whose certitude is found in inward, not in outward tests. For as we only know of any person what he manifests by his word or deed, so we believe that the self-revelation of God is the only one which is full, faultless, and free from all possibility of error. The best of men and the fondest of friends may shrink from telling the secrets of his heart, may under strong temptation deceive ; but whatever comes from God must disclose Him exactly as He is.

There is still a more conclusive argument than this. The whole matter of the trustworthiness of the facts regarding God that are included in the Creed of Christendom, turns upon the veracity of Jesus Christ. There are two things which He clearly said. One was that we can know God ; the other that He correctly revealed Him. His entire mission implied the possibility of our receiving divine disclosures : that is to say, He who is the highest authority among the sons of men on things spiritual and religious, affirmed the falseness of agnosticism. Carlyle, whom we quoted once before, said that "no man's opinion is worth anything when it conflicts with that of

Jesus Christ." This is perfectly true. Therefore if any one tell us that revelation is not possible, or that our reception of it is not possible, though he be some wise and learned son of culture, we can simply reply that Jesus taught otherwise. After that, it makes little difference what any one else says. We need not trouble ourselves to resort to arguments for the knowability of eternal and absolute truth, though there are plenty of them, when that One who is wiser than any sage, profounder than any philosopher, declared it. To contradict Him in the realm of religious and metaphysical thought, is presumptuous, and marks the folly of the man who does so. For, if not a Saviour, He is, at least, a wiser teacher than any one else who has undertaken to teach mankind. How much more is He, to those who regard Him as the Incarnate Word of God! But He went beyond this. He said that what He disclosed of God was correct: not divine truth so affected by human conditions as to be untrustworthy. He said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life;" "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me;" "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" "He that is of the truth heareth my voice." These are only a few of many utterances that affirm or imply that the revelation that we have in Him is one of real, actual truths regarding the nature and the character of God,

that which is highest and most essential in God; and that we, as made in His image, are capable of appreciating and receiving them.

Agnosticism has done the good work of showing that we cannot, through philosophy and speculation, reach a knowledge of the attributes and inner life of God, of His infinite qualities as the Self-existent One wherein He is unlike us. But it has not shown, and it is not within its power to show, that what He is, in His personal life and characteristics, cannot be known by faith in His Son. And these are the facts with which Theology deals. The verities of the Creed we hold and live by are verities regarding them. The rest is of little moment. The important thing is, that we have in Christ an actual disclosure of God as to His heart, His character, and His relations to His creatures. So Theology is a science of facts as certain, to those who believe, as are the facts which are ascertained by the senses. It is real knowledge, not accommodated or conventional, or incomprehensible formulæ of God and His ways.

But it is not complete, we are told. What of that? What knowledge is complete? Who will claim that any fact in any science is fully known, either in itself or in its relations? Who has an exhaustive acquaintance with a single insect or a single rock? It may be that these facts of the Gospel are even less known than those of nature. Their very character may leave a larger fringe

of mystery about them. This is not certain, since, in the fringe about the lowliest fact of nature, or the simplest one of experience, there is included all of God, if we may so speak; and when we pass into the higher spheres of inquiry and deal with life, we deal with a still larger element of the unknown. Biology brings us facts more remote from our grasp than chemistry. So, while it is true that it is difficult to determine the comparative degree of mystery in any case, yet we may say that, when we deal with the nature and acts of God, there are still more unsolved questions, there are still more reserved possibilities of disclosure. This may be a disadvantage for Theology when contrasted with the sciences of the phenomena that the senses apprehend, and may cause us to feel a greater degree of possible error in our inductions. It should undoubtedly make us more cautious and less dogmatic in our inferences.

But, on the other hand, there is an advantage peculiar to this science, which is the power to verify our processes, the possession of standards by which to detect errors. These are found in the person and teachings and spirit of Christ, as recorded in the New Testament. As all science consists in the combination of the data reasoned from with the process of reasoning, so, while our data may be more incomplete than those of other sciences, we yet possess what none of them have, and what their devotees would give anything to

acquire, — a criterion by which we can tell what is inconsistent and inadmissible in our processes. The manifestation of God in Christ will, if borne in mind, save us from what may at any time happen to the student of any other science — from falling into conclusions that are antagonistic to the very truth that is the subject of our study.

That this has not always been remembered, is most evident. Forgetfulness of the principle, that anything affirmed of God must be in harmony with the spirit and words of Jesus, has led to conclusions that are abhorrent. Logic has maintained them, and partisanship has accepted them, but they are nevertheless condemned by the norm which ought to be supreme to the Christian. As evident is the injury that this forgetfulness has produced. Believers have been perplexed; the head and the heart have been placed in conflict. Many have turned away from all definite belief because, as it has been presented too frequently, it seemed incompatible with the supremacy of conscience. Unbelievers have been given a plausible argument in the affirmation that such conclusions are identical with Christian truth; for, their overthrow being easy, Christianity goes with them. Many a man, unable to discriminate between the faith and false inferences from it, has been alienated from the Gospel because of harsh and immoral doctrines that were alleged to be part of it. This could not have happened had the standard of Christian

study been observed, that nothing can be true of God which does not harmonize with His manifestation in Christ. It is in measure as this has been adhered to that progress has been made, and in that measure alone.

Let it be so with us. Let us say nothing, believe nothing, that Jesus would not have said, that is not in accord with His life and utterances. Let no authority nor any reasoning gain our submission in such an issue. Let others see that we can make "the mind of Christ" supreme, and so shall we commend the Gospel to many a bewildered mind. Thus alone can the Church do this same thing. The world may not regard Christ as it should, but it has at any rate that idea of God which He has given to it; and it justly says that such doctrines as a stern or an unmerciful or an unethical Theology would teach are *ipso facto* false, because dishonoring to Him who is above all things tender, just, and loving.

Whitefield and Wesley were once arguing for and against the system called Calvinism, the former being an unshrinking advocate of it. The latter pushed the former until he consistently admitted that God acted only for His own glory, with no assignable reasons for His dealing differently with different men. Then Wesley exclaimed: "Your God is my Devil." And he was right; for that idea of God which some have taught, though few have held it in their hearts, is just what the ethical mind, the one taught of

Jesus, means by Satan, — a being who acts arbitrarily, without reason and without love.

So we come back to our definition of Theology, that it is the science of Christian facts, the process of their elucidation in accord with the spirit of Christ.

Here we meet two classes of critics. On the one hand, there are those who tell us that the conclusions of Theology are of no real validity, and then, pointing to its conflicting utterances, say that this shows how all Christianity is guesswork after all : if there is all this uncertainty in one part of it, there is no certainty anywhere. But this is to say what would be ridiculed in other matters. There is just the same certainty, and there is just the same uncertainty, as in any other department of study. There is no certainty in your science, whatever it be, we tell such a man, nothing settled and final. There is not a scientific proposition of any sort or kind of which that can be affirmed. A scientific statement means only that which is the best formulation of facts up to date. To-morrow may bring new facts which will demand a totally different formula, or it may bring new light on old ones which will revolutionize any generalization in existence. Inductions are but working hypotheses. All that is fixed is the facts themselves, the flowers, the stones, the stars, the living creatures, the events, that are studied. They are certain, but nothing is certain in what the science may

teach about their meaning and their relations. And so Theology has the same certainty in its facts and the same uncertainty in its inferences. There may be no more reason for accepting its results than those of any other science, but if no more, there is at least as much, for they are due to the working of the same human intelligence. But there is no more reason for rejecting its data because our reasonings are fallible, or because former positions are abandoned, than there was for denying that the planetary system was real when Copernicus overthrew the astronomy of previous ages. It may be, and probably is, the fault of Christians that so many seem involved in this confusion of thought; but at any rate many an opponent of our faith needs to learn to distinguish between the sure and redeeming facts of the Church's Creed and the tentative or scientific efforts to explain them. We can live on, sustained, comforted, saved by the Gospel, apart from any theologizing; just as well as the hungry man can find nourishment in food without any acquaintance with organic chemistry, or the processes of nutrition.

But others will now retort, from a different quarter, no certainty in Theology? Do you dare affirm this? I dare affirm what your Church and my Church teaches. If anything is evident, it is that the Church does, as it must, indorse no Theology, commit itself to no scientific results, and therein it shows that it is Apostolic and

Catholic. There are many systems or schools of Christian thought within the allowable limits of adherence to the Creed and Prayer Book. There are many theories of particular subjects, such as sacraments, ministry, atonement, eschatology, and others more or less important, many theories even of the very organization of the Church. But the Church identifies itself with none, regards all as only approximate at the best, and authorizes no man to speak for it as to the final definition of anything. It is the same as in the State. This is committed to no theory or explanation of its organic facts, no science of government, no formula of social or political science. There are men, it is true, who say that their party is the only allowable one, and the authorized definer of constitutional data; and so there are men who say that their ism or their theological affirmations are the voice of the Church, their doxy is orthodoxy. But as the State, so the Church frowns or smiles on such people according to their importance, and goes on, with no syllable of sanction for their claim, keeping itself clear of responsibility for the stammering and transient utterances of presumptuous men.

It leaves all that to sects. The idea of a sect, as has been stated elsewhere, is, that it is committed to some form of Christian thought, or to the especial emphasis of some particular Christian verity. There may have been some good

resulting from such bodies, especially when they think it their duty to testify to forgotten or obscured truths. But the Church idea is to allow no form of thought to be made binding upon its members. It says that they all are but scientific efforts to arrive at truth, and therefore not final attainments. It does this for two reasons. One is that, ever mindful of the limitations of human capacity in any sphere of study, it is especially so as to this study of the divine verities of its Creed, and consequently insists that no formula, no generalization, is ultimate, or ever can be, on the lips of creatures speaking of their Creator. That is, the Church allows no autocracy of logic in theology. Perhaps the greatest evil in the history of Christendom has been the claim to argue to irreversible conclusions with binding effect. For instance, because God's sovereignty is a truth, therefore immoral doctrines of predestination and thinly disguised fatalism are made matters of faith; because baptism is of divine appointment, therefore there is no salvation without it; because Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, therefore it was to appease a wrathful God. Such are specimens of the use of that little word *ergo*, which has led to intolerable tenets and to cruel persecutions and unchristian schisms. But this is all due to forgetting that, as in any other science that deals with facts, logic is of imperfect obligation or value; since, the data being but imperfectly

known as far as we have them, and only partial also, we cannot reach certain conclusions. We can never draw perfect conclusions from imperfect premises; yet such are all our premises when we deal with divine things, even more than in the realm of nature. Before we can draw a binding inference from the verities of our faith, we must have a certainty that we comprehend the latter in all their relations, which the Church never presumes to affirm.

Sometimes this claim to pursue inferences unerringly assumes grotesque forms in serious men's utterances. Not only in works of systematic theology, as they are called, but in single statements, we meet with an assumption of acquaintance with deep things that is appalling. Perhaps the climax was reached by an eminent New England divine who said that, with his system of doctrine, he could answer every question that could be asked. Compared with this, the assumptions of the Pope of Rome are modest and moderate.

The other reason why the Church holds no attainments in theology to be final is that which Christ has given, both directly and through the teaching of His Apostles. He said that the Holy Spirit would lead the Church into all the truth; that there was to be a growth in the knowledge of its Lord and Saviour in the entire body, as really as in the individual; and He never said that this leading should at any time

reach its completeness and there stop. The Romanist and the sectarian have alike a belief that, at some date, that guidance ceased upon this or that line because a goal was reached, and so they think that the formula then obtained may and must be accepted as a final crystallization of a truth. But the Church that is Apostolic, and, thank God! our own, believes that this leading is to go on and on, with ever deepening vistas into "the mystery of godliness," ever greater gains in purity of apprehension, ever larger perceptions of the fullness and richness of its every divine fact, whether dogma or sacrament or ordinance or promise. This must be so in the nature of the case.

But we need definite doctrine. This is the cry of many unable to understand the position of the Catholic Church, or to appreciate "the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." It has always been the wish of unthinking men. The simple fact is, that in their sense they cannot get it, and our spiritual mother declines to give it. She will leave room in her fold for those who are to come after, and whom, with maturer thought, the definite doctrines of to-day would not satisfy about such things as God's sovereignty, or man's ability, or the theory of atonement by Christ, or the working of the Holy Ghost. He is hardly kind who would so tie her up that his descendants will have to feed on his limited conceptions, or tune their voices to his

shibboleths, however sweet to his own ear they may be. And if he want this definite teaching, which will he take? Will he take that of the Eastern Church, or of the Western? Will he take that of Italy or of England? Will he take that of Aquinas or of Scotus? Will he take that of Hooker, or of Cosin? Will he choose to-day that of a Pusey or of a Maurice? A recent dignitary, referring to two eminent divines, said that he daily prayed that he "might live like a Taylor and die like a Bull." This apparently grotesque desire meant that all schools may teach us something, each so-called definite doctrine that some one has been satisfied with may help some of us somewhere. But let no one dare to say that conclusions which he has reached are definitive, in the sense of being binding upon other disciples of Christ, when they utter their belief in Him in their creed. The Church says to us, "Definite teaching is found in these facts upon which Christianity stands. Rest upon them, live by them, preach them. Beyond them, you have liberty to think and advise and suggest, and to express your convictions. But I decline to warrant your committing me, the Church that embraces all kinds of minds and must have room for all the ages, to any of your theological conclusions as final. Faultless conceptions of Christ and His work you cannot have and never will have. For, to finite creatures, there will ever remain an inexplorable re-

gion on the other side of every fact, and all your imagined definiteness is, at the best, but the imperfect result of scientific effort. I have enough to answer for without being accountable for, and making my message identical with, the conclusions of any man or any set of men at any time."

That is, the Church repudiates the idea of infallibility. There is a frequent confusion of thought about this term. Infallibility, as Rome claims it, and as it really means, is inerrancy or perfectness in doctrinal definition. Rome asserts this, and so in principle does every body of men that commits itself to any theological system or theory of the Gospel; for, if honest, it must believe itself right and others wrong in what it stands for. The strength of this position is the unwillingness or the incapacity of many to discriminate between facts and our conception of their relations; and to see that, while we can be sure of the former, we cannot in any way be sure of the correctness of the latter. Yet this is the attraction of Rome to many, that to those who regard true Christianity, not as a life of trust, but as assent to a set of accurately stated dogmatic propositions, that system says, "Come unto me and I will give you rest," rest from controversy over matters of belief. Rome alone makes openly such an absurd and vain pretension, yet every sect makes it by implication. But for those who see that the peace of the Christian is not the rest of final settlement of

all deep questions, but confidence in Gospel facts, this invitation has no relevancy. It is seen to be an offer of what is not at all essential to peace of mind, and of what is only given in counterfeit, never in reality. For infallibility is a dream never to be realized, a hallucination if believed in. It is impossible to the Christian who believes in the leading of the Spirit as a continuous thing. All history contradicts it, in the cases where it has been claimed. Roman so-called infallible utterances have been changed and corrected; and sects that began to be because of some tenet of which their founders were so sure that they left the Church, perhaps at cost of heroic sacrifices, to witness to it, have come to give up their very *raison d'être* by admitting that those founders were, after all, mistaken. That the Church will not actually fall away from its message or die out, we must believe, since Christ has promised this; but that it can or ever will infallibly utter the fullness of any part of that message, there is no reason to expect, no reason to desire.

And now we see the value of the theological work of the past, and of the vast literature which it has given us, and which records the progress of Christians in apprehending the Gospel upon which they lean, the Christ in whom they trust. The progress has not been so slow, nor the results so small, as some perhaps imagine. The element of mystery in this science is somewhat

larger than in some others; and so we should expect that, apart from the influence of feeling and prejudice, which are naturally more involved, it should advance towards its goal more slowly than they. The inorganic sciences have advanced with very halting steps, and the organic ones even more slowly; and their schools of thought are so various and opposed as seriously to confuse us, who do not understand their recondite discussions much better than they seem to understand our own. But there has been that progress in theology which we should expect from the efforts of human intelligence, and the guidance of the Spirit of God. Clearer views of the divine truth have been gained, and the limits of our capacity more clearly perceived. There has been advance in seeing what may be said, and what may not, about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and their respective operations. Those parts of Christendom that have been capable and alive have made advance in proportion to their conditions; an advance felt in the life and thought of their people, shown in the utterances of the clergy, lending color to literature and assistance to conduct. Especially marked has this advance been in the century now drawing to its close, perhaps more than in any of its predecessors, except the fourth. The various ancillary sciences, with whose aid alone this one can make progress, have been developed to a marvelous degree. First comes the

interpretation of the Bible, for which we have unprecedented assistance in improved critical apparatus, and in our wider acquaintance with every branch of knowledge that bears upon the elucidation of the sacred pages. Then there is the advance made in historical study, in psychology with its light on spiritual facts, even in physics which discloses so much as to God's methods in creation and preservation. These are all, with many others, achievements of this century, and contribute what our fathers longed for, — indispensable assistance to the queen of all sciences; that which she awaits, and which they can give. The consequence is, that they who are willing to seek it will find an advance of which others little know, and which is often denied by some who are called learned in theology, and who would have been so a century ago, but whose position is as representative of this noble science to-day as would be that of a contemporary of a Hutton in geology, or of a Kepler in astronomy, or of a Galvani in physics. Our very children now learn, as commonplaces, what our grandfathers died without seeing, and reject as abhorrent what the latter fed upon as precious. We now wonder at what the best and wisest saw no difficulty in holding; and, in our devotions and conduct, we are guided by what they may only have dreamed of as unpractical vagaries. Problems in thought and action, in the world of substance and of phenomena, in Church and State,

in polity and dogma, once perplexing, are now easily solved by the progress made in theology. Many of the implications and the bearings of the Gospel of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, amplified in the facts of the Apostolic message, are apprehended now as, a hundred years ago, there seemed little hope that they ever could be.

That is, this vast literature, which is so often regarded as of little value, has the same value as that of other sciences. True, there is many a musty tome that records forgotten teachings, and many a volume now unopened that contains the results of years of labor. Yet, after all, those books tell the progress in steps of earnest thought, the contribution of each worker to the cause, the special path pursued by each school of toilers, the best thought of each time up to the point attained in our own day. There is much that has been left behind forever; yet there is much that can never be outgrown, much that is too profound or too holy for us to say that it has nothing for us. The fathers in this science, like the fathers in others, — the Galileos, the Buffons, the Newtons, the Lamarcks, — may have said many things that are antiquated, but they had a grasp upon principles and a vision of vistas that are rarely possessed now. And so we are all richer for this theological labor, and this lore of other days. All share in its results. They are in the air. Churchman and Sectarian, High and Low and Broad Schools of thought, men that know

nothing about the matter as well as those who know, — all are enlightened and better for this progress in theological study. This growth in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ brings blessing to all, though they never read its volumes, just as all are partakers of the benefits of many another line of human inquiry, who are unacquainted with its steps, know nothing of its struggles, have no honor for its heroes.

But we must not overrate these results of theology, great as they are. We must remember how much more is undisclosed, how many more questions are unanswered still. Upward progress renders the horizon ever larger, and shows us, not less but more of the wide, wide world of nature. It is so with the wider world of truth and things divine. Each new elevation we attain, as we seek to scale the height of any of these lofty verities of the faith, which, like majestic peaks, soar upwards towards the heavens and are bathed in sunlight, not only shows us, as any one who tries it knows, new views of the truth possessed, but also new demands for effort, new distances to traverse ere the top be reached, — that summit which never shall be gained, since to all eternity we shall be approaching, without attaining, that full understanding which only God has of what He has told us in His Son. For that summit is at His throne.

So theology is only a science, but a very holy and a very precious one, and one to which the

Church and the world, and each one of us, owe more than is often realized, because of what, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it has drawn from the Gospel of the Son of God.

Each one ought to some extent to make himself familiar with it. The laity are not required to be theologians in this Church, and it is a blessed thing that only the simple Apostles' Creed is asked from their lips in baptism. That reproach often made against our laity, that they know so little of doctrine, is not so much to their discredit as some think. We are very glad that they are not, and are not expected to be, committed to any transient shibboleth or dominant idea, nor to define "the plan of salvation," as it is called, in all details, upon the basis of some assumption to which all the rest must conform, and by which every nook and corner of truth is thought to be illumined. Yet it is true that the laity can and should make themselves better acquainted with theological progress than they generally do. If the matter is put in a novel it is read, and a great deal of theology, often correct, yet more generally extremely crude and incorrect, is absorbed because sugar-coated with fiction. But there are plenty of volumes which are within reach of those who are not experts, which will help them, teach them correctly, enrich their religious thinking, and show them a wealth of acquisition and a reach of discovery which they would deeply enjoy.

For, with all that may be said as to differences of opinion, and all that may be charged as to the defect of fallibility, yet, when we consider that the loftier the field of study, the greater is the element of mystery; the higher the phenomena, the greater the liability of investigators to reach varying conclusions, — we can affirm that, in this age of the sciences, none has made more advance than this sovereign of them all. As the brightest lives of history are found in the calendar of the Church's saints, so the loftiest intellects are found in the list of its students, and the richest contributions to the world's light come from their consecrated inquiry. And to-day, little as some appear to be aware of it, the keenest investigators, and the profoundest seers into mysterious things, are found among those who are laboring in that science which has as its aim the making known of "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

LECTURE VII.

THE BIBLE.

"They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."—*Acts* xvii. 11.

WHAT is the Bible, and what is its place in Christianity? Some may wonder why this inquiry was not considered first, and before the other questions, but, as has been partly seen, and will be yet more fully seen, the answer to it depends upon those that have preceded it. It is in accordance with our conceptions regarding them that our view of the Sacred Volume will be formed.

By the first question, What is the Bible? is not meant merely what it is as to its contents. It is a volume consisting of writings by men taught of Christ, or by their disciples, and embracing biographies of Him, a history of the foundation of the Church, some general letters and some other letters to individuals and local churches, and a book of predictions as to the future of Christendom and the world. There is also added to that collection the sacred writings of Israel, which received the indorsement of the Lord and His Apostles as

fit to be included in a book for the Church's use. Concerning the history of the formation of this volume it is not necessary to speak; nor are we called upon to go into discussions which, however pressing and important, yet do not involve what we are now to notice, and do not affect what this lecture will endeavor to set forth.

The question, What is the Bible? means, What estimate are we to make of it? where are we to place it among the books of the world? what deference are we to give it? We shall be guided in our reply by considering certain features that stand out as we look at it.

At the outset, we notice its unity. In reality it is a library, a collection of writings made during an interval of nearly fifteen hundred years by about seventy authors in different lands, and who, in many cases, never saw one another. Further, these men never knew that their writings were to be collected in a volume. Yet really it is one book. Although so diverse in origin, it is so much a unit that many readers do not seem to know it is not the work of one man; and most readers peruse it without thinking of its varied authorship, if aware of it. For all differences are lost in the sense of the prevailing unity that is felt as one reads it. It is a unit in its theme: the redemption of man, and preparation for that result. It is a unit in its temper and tone: a holy book. It is a unit in its teaching: it does not contradict itself. It is a unit in

its progress: does not speak a different utterance as years go by, nor revert to stages that had been passed.

Now, this unity of so many writings by so many men, during so many years, would seem to indicate a superintending mind. When we see a number of blocks of stone, upon being brought together, combine into a symmetrical edifice, we conclude as evident that some one directed their preparation who had the structure in view. So this harmonious book, resulting from the combination of so many factors, indicates the superintendence of an intelligence that guided all the work towards that intended goal. This can have been no human mind. A superintendence over so wide a field can only mean the Providence of God. Thus has the fact that the labors of so many men result in a handbook for God's people, which is so consistent, symmetrical, and adapted to the end for which the ages since have used it, always indicated to reasonable men the presence of a divine element in its canon, made them feel that the collection has been more than the result of merely human selection and preservation. Define it as you please, there is nowhere else any greater instance of the working of Providence than in the history of the Bible.

But this is not all. There are some other facts that must be taken into the account, in forming an estimate of this strange book, bearing upon other questions than its origin as a collection.

Consider its exhaustlessness. No other book has been so much studied. The treatises and commentaries devoted to it exceed enumeration. Biblical literature is equal in quantity to that of any other department, perhaps greater than any. That study has been varied. It has been devotional, to stimulate piety ; practical, to guide conduct ; and doctrinal, to develop theology. It has been prosecuted by all kinds of minds,— by the most acute as well as by the most commonplace. Men in the front rank of intellectual power have gone to it for ages, as to a mine for exploration ; preachers, as to a spring for themes and thoughts ; poets, as to a garden for flowers of imagery and illustration. Yet it has not been exhausted, and shows no sign of exhaustion. It is studied to-day as much as ever, more critically than ever before, yet it yields as much as ever that is fresh and precious. Instead of having been outgrown by human progress, on the contrary all that progress only ministers to its study. Other books are one by one laid away upon the shelf, superseded in the flight of time, however valuable they may once have been ; but this one lives on in perennial value. It sees ambitious literature pass into forgetfulness, just as the Church sees empires rise and pass away that had threatened its supremacy.

Again, consider the effects of this volume on life and conduct, — a subject needing the history of Christendom and the history of civilization to

cover its ground. Its perusal has been the cause of revolutions in countless characters; its distribution, the source of the strength of the strongest nations; its reopening, the awakening of peoples from the sleep of ages. This can be said of no other volume. In counting up the factors that have contributed to make the world what it is to-day, in enumerating the forces potent for good in this land, the powers that have shaped our lives, our homes, our surroundings, this is one of the few controlling elements, and the only book that is to be included in such a list.

Consider its effects upon literature. This is especially noticeable in our own, while it is also great in that of other lands and tongues. One can hardly open a page of prose or poetry, of fiction, of history, or of philosophy, without finding what would not have been there had there been no Bible. This is true of writings by men who do not esteem it as we do. It is so ingrained in our thought that it is a question whether it would be possible to write a volume on any subject that should owe nothing to the Scriptures. It would, at any rate, be extremely dull or impoverished in style. Skeptics and infidels do not seem able to escape incurring indebtedness to it. They have to use its metaphors, refer to its contents, recognize its prestige. Its version is the English classic, and occupies a place in our literature that no other book occupies in any other language. But, apart from this matter of style,

take out of the pages of Shakespeare, or Tennyson, or Browning, or out of Gibbon or Macaulay, yes, out of those of an unbeliever like Shelley, or a creature of self-indulgence like Byron, all that they owe to the Bible, and the result would be pages white with hiatuses, and as void of sequence as of illustration. And as to Milton, what would be left of him? Yes, take him who stands at the head of human literature, the peerless Dante, and see there how even the supreme poet, because the loftiest prophet, was what he was, wrote what he wrote, because of the influence of this wonderful book.

Consider its superiority in dignity to other books. They all seem commonplace and earthly in comparison. They may be more exciting, more interesting even, yet no one would say they are so lofty. They may be beyond our imitation, yet not inconceivably so. That is, we can imagine men able to write the Ethics of Aristotle or a play of Shakespeare, without absurdity, but no sensible man will claim that he, or any one else, could ever write the Book of Isaiah, or the Epistle to the Romans. It is not what we expect of any genius or any learning. We regard it as no reproach to compare any other work with it unfavorably, since it is known to be, of course, inimitable.

Notice its superiority to its own contemporary literature. We have plenty of writings of the days of the New Testament, and are finding

more and more belonging to the period covered by the Old. Yet none of them approach the Sacred Scriptures. The Greek and Latin classics, with all their wealth, have nothing to lay hold of the heart as do these books by lowly Jews; and as to the others, compared with the Old Testament, all ancient volumes of India or Chaldea are "flat, stale, and unprofitable." As Max Müller said, when criticised for publishing versions of the Sacred Books of the East, Christians should court the comparison, for it shows how inferior these are to the Sacred Books of Israel.

But it is chiefly with regard to the moral and religious element that these books show their superiority to old literature. This is the supreme test of a book, that which must fix its rank, the measure of the value of any volume. And here the Bible shows an unapproachable elevation. Now these writers, though living in different epochs and in varied lands, were yet always surrounded by crude and low ideas of God. Their contemporaries are full of statements and ideas that we spurn, and of ethics that are intolerable; they have no reproof for hideous vices, and teach unworthy views of life. But out of such times and such surroundings this Bible emerges clear as the sunlight, pure as the snow. This is especially marked where it treats the same themes as other writings. Take, for instance, the story of creation and of the early days of the world.

On Chaldean monuments and tablets that story is all found, but there it is mixed with polytheism and puerilities and worthless rubbish. Here, however, as in all the rest of its pages, the standard of the Bible can endure the tests of our mental and moral progress. Its ethics conform to the taste of these latest times, for it is read as helpful unto true godliness by the holiest in their holiest hours, in this evening of the nineteenth century.

For consider, lastly, how it has been loved. To say that it has been supremely treasured, and copies of it valued as relics; that it has been the only volume prized by the sick and the suffering, the only one cherished in the most sacred moments of life, — is all too trite to dwell upon. The earnest opponents of the faith have done their best to shake its hold upon human affection, have used many a plausible argument, many a keen weapon, but they have not succeeded. Never were so many Bibles sold as to-day, never so many distributed. If we were to poll the list of the holy and intelligent people of any community, who doubts that this would be found to be, of all the volumes in the world, the most valued? Other books are read with intense interest, but we cannot say that men love them. Others may be regarded by some as more important, yet none has such a hold upon the hearts of those we most revere. There is no other book for which men will die, without which life would be so

dark; none else that could not be replaced if the world's libraries were burned by some new Omar.

Now, how are we to account for a volume not only so strange a unit, but so exhaustless to study, so wide in its influence, so superior to others, and so beloved? This question cannot be put aside. This book is unique. There is no other that can be put on the same shelf. Great and vast as is the literature of this world, the books of the Bible form a class separate from it all, because superior in value to mankind. There must be some adequate explanation of such a fact. What is it?

The only reasonable one is that which has ever been given by the best thought of the most advanced lands, and by the Church, which represents the efflorescence of human opinion, — is that God gave it to the world. It is manifestly His book; as clearly His bestowal as creation or redemption are His work. It cannot be man's gift, for it is beyond his capacity, because it does for God's people what only God can do, — brings a message that bears the divine stamp, shows the divine mind. But this is not only true regarding its compilation, of which we have spoken; it is true of its contents and matter, so exhaustless and so exalted. That is, a divine element in the component parts can alone account for these peculiarities that have been noticed; and that element is Inspiration.

At once this word awakens opposition, and perhaps ridicule. Many say that it is only an antiquated notion of credulous folk. But it is pretty safe to say, as observation shows, that they who speak thus either do not know what inspiration means, or else are not sufficiently familiar with the Book to pass any opinion upon its peculiarities.

By "inspiration" we mean that influence of the Spirit of God which gives discernment in spiritual things, whether moral or religious. Surely this is the mark of the Bible, for this has made it precious. Its value has not lain in its historic lore, nor in its poetic beauty, nor in its literary isolation; but in the light that comes from it for the dark hours of life, the deep hours of thought, and the soaring hours of holy meditation. It is "The Book," — which is its name translated into English, — just because it is alone authoritative on supreme things. It is solitary as the volume of religious and ethical teaching. But whence can such illumination come, if not from the "Father of lights"? Some would tell us that its inspiration is the same as that of poets and painters, who have been given that attribute in common parlance; that its superiority is the result of genius. But there is no evidence that these writers were all geniuses, or that any were such extraordinary men as to be capable in themselves of giving such light to the world. Moreover, this afflatus is not that which results in æsthetic

or in imaginative excellence; it is of a kind that genius does not possess; it is a spiritual inspiration. The Bible speaks to men of loftier things than art. Its power, its excellence, pertain to a different sphere. It speaks to the heart, of God and holiness, of right and truth, of eternity and of the way to gain it. Men prize it beyond all other books because in it they hear, as in no others, the voice of God, — find in it what they seek from Him, and what can only come from Him. But, some will retort, Wherein then is this different from the inspiration of saintly preachers, or of such books as the Pilgrim's Progress, or the Imitation of Christ? They are indeed akin, we admit, for they all show the divine afflatus. But the difference is, that the latter owe to the Bible all the value they possess, gain thence their inspiration. It stands to them as the spring to the water, as the original to the copy, at the best. Other men might write, like an à Kempis or a Bunyan, by drawing upon the same source, but not like a John. We quote the pages of the latter as finally authoritative, as well as supremely precious. But no one would probably so quote the former, which at once shows that in their cases inspiration means a different thing in kind as well as degree.

So we see that there are three possible views of this marvelous volume. One is, that it is only human, the pious work of gifted men. We reply to this that, if it could account for the ele-

vation of the Bible, it could not explain its unity; and as to its elevation, if one see no more than human illumination, no more than what is feasible to men, by comparison with what men have otherwise done, if one see not that the Bible occupies a solitary position over against the other books in the world, — it is a matter of judgment, about which, like one of taste, we cannot argue. It is like saying that one sees no more than humanity in Christ, or human wisdom in history; things which cannot be demonstrated, any more than one can demonstrate the excellence of a picture, or the beauty of a flower. Such a man lacks the development of his religious perceptions, and that is all we can say. As was remarked, this denial of any divine element is usually due to a misapprehension of what it means, — a reaction from the exaggerated statement of it, to which we now turn.

The usual position regarding the Bible, the principal error to be met, has been the other extreme, or holding its inspiration to such a degree that the human element has been entirely denied. The chief danger to its real value has been making it only a divine dictation, where the penmen had no part beyond the writing of the words. This is the same heresy as Docetism regarding Christ, for it is affirming that the humanity in the written word is only a semblance. It shows, in the one case as in the other, how intensely patent the divinity is when it has been so difficult to keep its affirmation within bounds.

But this theory is as much contradicted by facts in Inspiration as in Incarnation. The human element in the Scriptures is as real as that in the life of Jesus; and it is as absurd to thought, and as dangerous to religion, to deny it in one case as in the other. It is seen everywhere, — in the differences between the writers and between their productions; in the expressions that mark the working of real minds, the actual thinking of living men. It may seem superfluous to speak of a matter so obvious, yet every day we see that it is necessary. This extreme position has alienated, and is alienating, many from the Bible itself, who think that to accept this book requires the acceptance of so indefensible a view of it. Yet even this error has a singular strength for men. Many lives and careers, saturated with the idea, have had a marvelous force because of it. This is seen in the case of General Gordon, whose letters show what a mighty power it was in his heroic life. How true that inspiration must be which, in an indefensible form, yet makes men as holy and fearless as he! How shallow they must be who deny it!

A sensible and a sound view of all the facts, then, leads us to see in this book both a human and a divine element; therefore our effort must be to seek some formula of their relation. It is easy here, as elsewhere, to solve the problem by eliminating either factor, but a wise man would rather leave it unsolved than gain such an un-

candid solution; and unsolved it must ever remain, just as the problem of the union of the human and divine in history or in life, or in the person of the Redeemer.

And herein is this Church of ours found to be wise. It has never given any definition of Inspiration, allows no one to commit it to any. In the Prayer Book and Ordination Services, as in the Articles, the Sacred Volume is said to be a standard, an ultimate rule of faith and practice; which is giving to it an authority that cannot be given to human utterances. But the word "inspiration" is not mentioned; the whole subject as to how the Volume has come to possess such an authority is studiously avoided. God is said to speak in it, but it is not said how that is true. The Church is too prudent to use any term or state any theory which is sure to be outgrown, and to be forever insufficient. When one can tell me how the divine and human were related in Christ; how God sanctifies a mind; how God guides the lives of men; yes, how God sustains the world: — when he tells me the formula of any connection between God and the creature, I will tell him the formula of an inspiration that is just as patent as these other facts.

This much, however, we must abide by: the inspiration was of the men, not of the books. What we see is, not the light from the pages, but that from the writers who wrote them. They were illumined in such measure as each needed

for his task, whether to avoid saying the unfit, or to say that which was needed. Call it the inspiration of a people or of a Church, which is behind the books, yet it is the same thing. If it be the result of the inspiration of Israel, or of the Christian brotherhood, yet that inspiration culminated, as nowhere else, in these writers of the Bible.

Again, this was real inspiration, not physical compulsion or dictation. It was the free and real work of thinking men, but of men whose minds had an illumination we do not find in others, a gift so to perceive spiritual things as to render them our guides and authorities. It is that which no education, no talents can confer, which makes us ready to learn of them what we cannot learn of others, willing to sit at their feet when we would be taught of God. It is that which makes men who will call no man master, their disciples.

Such, then, being the Bible, a divinely given and divinely inspired Volume, what is its place in Christendom, its relation to the Church? This is a very different question from the one just considered. The statement of its divine character does not settle its use. It is also a very important question; for some answers to it have been the source of much error and confusion, and, as we shall see, have led to complications that rendered difficult the vindication of essential Christianity. It has been touched upon before this, and the correct reply indicated. But let us

now address ourselves to it directly, that the issue may be clear. We do not refer to the devotional use of the Scriptures. About this there is no dispute, as to its being a means of grace, a help in the spiritual life. It is rather their use in matters of belief and practice that we would consider, about which there is great dispute, and a common view of which is, as we shall see, entirely wrong and utterly impracticable.

The position that is true and consistent with the idea of Christianity may be shown by an experience which set it forth in a way that was new and effective.

It was once my lot to be storm-stayed for a week in Syracuse, waiting for the turbulent Mediterranean to calm itself sufficiently for us to pass to Tunis. There was plenty to occupy us during the day in such a place, where we could visit the deep quarries in which seven thousand Athenian captives were starved to death, as related by Thucydides; the fountain of Cyane, where Orpheus found entrance to the lower world in search of Proserpine; the beautiful blue Anapo, fringed with nodding papyrus; and other places interesting to the classical student.

But the evenings offered no such diversions, and so my companion and I passed them at the café or club, where the officers of the garrison, the professors in the university, and whatever there was of aristocracy in that dead city, were wont to gather, and where we met that courtesy

in which Italians excel. On the second evening, while we were enjoying the bright scene and watching the games and conversations in progress, a gentleman approached to invite us to join one of the circles, supposing us to be English tourists. Upon learning that we were Americans, he became interested, for he had never before met those from beyond the sea. We spoke of the themes in which intelligent Italians are so much concerned, liberal institutions, and educational and material advance. It became necessary for me to let him know that I was a clergyman of the Anglican communion in America; and immediately he launched out into inquiries regarding religion, the great topic of the thoughtful among his people, who believe in an historic Church and ancient institutions, yet wish them free from abuses and corruptions. He displayed an unusually clear apprehension of the great truths of Christianity, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the example of Christ, and others still, which he understood better than the average layman whom we meet in our own land, together with a perception of the truth of criticisms upon the Romish system that he had met in books and periodicals. He pushed inquiry after inquiry with such a comprehensive knowledge of Christianity that I remarked that he was unusually familiar with the Bible and its contents. With a tone of sadness, he replied, "I have never seen a Bible. They were not

permitted in Sicily until our revolution, and since then we have been able to purchase them no nearer than at Naples." I took from my pocket an Italian Testament, which I carried for philological as well as religious purposes, after the example of Kossuth, who testified that it was the best book to learn any language from, and said it was a pleasure to show it to him. He handled it with reverent interest, looked at its pages, and gave it back. Upon being told that he must keep it as a souvenir of our meeting, he ardently asked whether I really meant it, and, upon being assured thereof, embraced me with characteristic effusiveness. Then he arose and went from group to group, arresting games and conversations, to say: "See this Testament! An American priest has given it to me!" It was a scene to be remembered, to see those moustachioed and uniformed men passing the little volume from hand to hand, as if it were some gem, looking at it as if the sight were an epoch in their lives, and then thanking me for so great a privilege. We resumed our conversation, and my friend, a nobleman, mentioned many things concerning which he had long wished light from the Sacred Volume; asking me to show him what it had to say upon such matters as the position of the ministry, the character of confession, the truth about the Lord's Supper, the nature of the family, and so forth. This discussion lasted several evenings, and the assembly resolved itself

into a sort of Bible class, a new thing in a very old town. For instance, while speaking on one occasion of the question of the celibacy of the clergy, to which he rightly attributed many of the evils of the Church's condition, I asked why they who felt as he did, did not use in this controversy the argument from the marriage of St. Peter. "Peter married!" he exclaimed, "where did you get such an idea?" It was easy to show him where that Apostle's mother-in-law's illness was spoken of, and her healing narrated; and he then eagerly imparted to all in the room the astounding piece of information that the Pope's alleged predecessor was not a celibate. This was news to them. They would not believe it until each had read it for himself, and they went home that night with a new and generative idea in their heads.

And so our evenings passed in this strange Bible study, until the ship could sail that bore me away from where, there is reason to believe, some seed had fallen into ground that welcomed it.

This incident, by a concrete illustration, casts light upon our inquiry as to the place of the Bible in the Church.

It shows, in the first place, that it is not the transmitter of the Gospel through the ages. This is the popular idea: that it is the one means, divinely appointed thereto, of perpetuating the facts which Christ chose His Apostles to proclaim for human salvation.

But this man had received Christianity without it, and a very complete and helpful Christianity. He was as well informed, concerning what really gives it its value, as persons whom we meet in our more favored land. And does he not represent the great majority of Christians? How many have lived and died without possessing the Sacred Volume, or who perhaps could not read it if they had it! But not only is this true of past centuries when it was more or less inaccessible: many live by the Gospel now who do not receive it from that source. As a rule, people do not become Christians because the Bible persuades them, but only study its pages after they have believed. The Bible itself probably makes few believers. Its preciousness is seen when faith has preceded it.

How, then, is the Gospel transmitted? How do the succeeding generations receive their Christianity? Just as that Italian had received his, — through the Church; by the creeds, the services, the sacraments, the feasts and fasts, the holy days, of that Church; through the Christian family; through literature; through tradition; through that whole stream of life and thought which are found in Christendom, maintained by its activities, and from which our life cannot be separated. The Church, that body of baptized people of which the historical organization is the background even where ignored, the permanent and sustaining factor, however rejected, — this is

that which brings the Gospel to us, first and immediately; in our Bible countries, as much as in that island of Sicily where, corrupt as it was, it has made those whom this man represented familiar with the redeeming verities that are in Christ Jesus.

And was not this organization or brotherhood intrusted with just this commission? Was it not founded to preach the Gospel? Were not Apostles sent to send others to spread what they received from Christ? No mention is made of the Bible in the foundation of Christianity; nothing is said about it to the Apostles; neither Jesus nor they ever spoke of it as the means to save men. That is said to be effected through "the foolishness of preaching;" that is, through the ministry of the Church, which came into being to be the transmitter of the Gospel through the centuries.

And the history of this precious Book shows that it could have no such intention. We have seen that it was a collection of Apostolic writings composed after the Gospel had begun to be preached, and when the work was well under way. It was several hundred years before the Bible as we have it was in existence. How, then, can it be claimed to be the transmitter of Christianity, the one divinely intended means to that end, when not only has the Gospel been transmitted since without it, but when it did not exist at the time that transmission was commanded

and begun; when another means was provided for that purpose; when the Bible was in a sense the Church's creation, not at all its creator?

What, then, is the place of the Bible? Again, our Sicilian helps us to decide this. He knew and saw that there were corruptions in the Christianity about him, and in the Church to which he owed so much, and he wished something by which he could detect and correct them. This is still our constant need. The Church that hands down the faith, and was founded to that end, is composed of fallible and erring men, and it was to be feared that the light which it started out to bear would be dimmed. Tradition, while living on, is liable to become impure as its stream flows through the circumstances of time. Again, as we have seen, Christians would and should pursue the task of theological inquiry into the faith committed to them as facts to be fathomed. But the human mind is imperfect in its processes; its best reasoning is precarious; the deeper its speculations the larger the liability to stray. Therefore, for these as well as for other reasons, some standard would be needed whereby to detect deviations from the path that leads into the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. This truth may be classified as the truth regarding the Church's foundation; the explanation or amplification of the Saviour's work; and the prophecies of the future of the world, of the Church, and of the individual.

Now what should be the standard regarding such matters? It can only be what Apostles taught, preserved in the changeless form of documents. Then, if that which they had taught, being preserved in other ways, in tradition and in institutions, became mingled with error, comparison with this that they had written would show the fact. So came about the compilation of the New Testament, and therewith the use of the Old, which these men endorsed and said that Christ endorsed.

For Christians soon found out two things. One was that the career of the Church was to be longer than they had supposed, when, at first, they had anticipated the speedy return of the Lord. The other was that as the years of this career should succeed, and primitive days grow more remote, there would increase an already perceptible tendency to introduce foreign elements, to draw dangerous inferences, to add unwarranted doctrines, joined with a lessening capacity to detect such aberrations, owing to the allurements and influences of the world. So they desired, with yearly increasing intensity, such a picture of Christ and such statements of His work, such a setting forth of the Gospel of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, such utterances about the facts of that Gospel, as would form an unchanging standard of comparison. Christianity must always, as we have seen, agree with the conditions of its beginning. The edifice must

always be consistent with the foundation. It may grow, and new features and new factors may be added, but there must be no violation of the original design. Clearly, the only way to be sure of this agreement is ever to refer to written words of such men as were charged to found the Church, and start it on its career with the Gospel received from Him on whom it is built; for what is written down is not subject to adulteration, as that which is not must always be.

So Christians soon began to collect all such writings as they could gather from the various churches and individuals that had received them. Care was exercised in accepting such alleged documents. Some were found earlier than others. Some were not received as authentic so soon as others. But the Gospels and the chief Epistles were collected and generally used after a hundred years or less; the remaining books were accepted gradually by Christendom, and at length, after about five centuries, the process was finished, and that Volume which we have was completed, as the result of effort to gain as complete as possible a presentation of Christ and His work, in the written words of Apostolic men. We see in this result the undeniable evidences of the Providence of God superintending this human work, and in the component parts we discern that inspiration which can only come from Him.

Now to this end, the detecting of deviations

and corruptions in the Church's transmission of the faith received, it has ever served. It has led to every reformation that has taken place, by showing when it was required and what was needed. It was the power in the great Reformation, and was used to lead Christians back to conformity with original Christianity. It enabled them to discriminate as to what should be retained and what rejected out of the growths and modifications of fifteen centuries. It is doing that work now. Its use is not over. Thinkers and students are asking whether there may not yet remain unwarranted elements in Christian life and thought; and they are finding that there are things received that are not as harmonious with the unchanged Apostolic teaching as has been supposed by the popular religionism of the day; that perhaps the Reformation, which some think completed three hundred years ago, was after all, in unsuspected directions, unfinished. Beyond this, the application of this standard is causing searchings of heart among Protestants, and showing that, in their theology as in their polity, they cannot rely upon their traditions; that they may be involved in departures from the Apostolic norm as truly as the Romanists whom they have been regarding as alone open to the charge of unscriptural doctrine. To some of us, it is as difficult to see how many who claim to be Bible Christians are any less violating New Testament indications

than the veriest and extremest Papist. Many a sect that calls itself Evangelical has yet to learn that its traditions are not more sure than the papal, being only what its people have received from their fathers ; not drawn from the Bible, as they claim, but injected into it : the interpretations of prejudgment.

But this position of the Bible, as the divinely given norm to keep the Church true in the utterance of its message, has not been sufficiently remembered, and several serious consequences have resulted thence.

One is that it has been so identified with Christianity that belief in it has been made synonymous with belief in Christ. It has been put in His place as the object of faith. It has come between the soul and Him, as really, though not as disastrously, perhaps, as sacerdotalism has ever done. But, whatever value this Volume may have, whatever our estimate of it, our relation to it must not in any degree supplant our relationship to our Lord. Christianity is trust in Him, living discipleship of Him ; and the only value of anything else can be that it helps us in that discipleship. To believe in the Bible's every word does not make us believers in the Gospel. Never to see it, and so not to believe a word of it because unknown, or not to believe this or that part of its narrations, does not necessarily render us unbelievers in Jesus Christ.

Again, this abuse of the Bible, as practically

identifying belief in it with belief in Christ, has, it is to be feared, stood in the way of many a conversion to Christ. Because of misinformation, or the influences of unwise teachers, some have accepted this identification as true; and, not being able to accept this or that thing in its pages, this or that book even, as what they think divine, they have given up their belief in it, and then their Christianity. They could be Christians, but are not able to agree with their denomination or their Church about this Volume. Others have been turned away by the very idea that faith is to rest upon a book at all, to which they had thought Christianity committed; for this is evidently not the meaning of faith, to an intelligently religious man.

Again, this identification of Christianity with this precious book has led assailants to think that, in destroying its credibility by controverting some of its contents, they overthrow the faith itself. This is the position of the ordinary infidel orator. He shouts Victory! when he has made some audience believe that he has destroyed the trustworthiness of the Bible by an attack upon some of its parts. And the trouble is that many Christians accept the issue. They cannot help it, since, not believing in any other pillar and ground of the faith, any argument against the Bible is one against all belief in Christ. But this is all a mistake. Many Christians, like my Sicilian friend, never saw a Bible, and we must

not make Christianity stand or fall with it. It not only is a false position, it makes the defense of our faith difficult. We can defend that Volume, we are not afraid to meet that issue, but we must not admit that reasons for belief in Christ are dependent upon and identical with our ability to conduct so learned and so intricate an argument as that for a collection of many documents of ancient times. Nor must we admit that, when some eloquent caviler has overthrown the literal accuracy of some incident in the Old Testament, or shown that Jael was wrong in killing Sisera, or that perhaps St. Peter did not write the second epistle that bears his name, or that St. John did not write his Gospel, — that then he had destroyed all reasons for believing in the Gospel of the Son of God, preached in sacrament and holy season, in ordinances and institutions coming to us by a different and an independent channel.

Another consequence of imagining that the Bible is the sole container and intended transmitter of Christianity is, that we are not to hold or believe anything not therein found, a position touched upon in another lecture. If it were such, and if that position had such a basis, the results would be very inconvenient. It would leave us, as we have seen, without explicit warrant for infant baptism, or Sunday observance, or admission of women to either Sacrament, and other customs. But, when we consider that

the New Testament consists of books and letters written for special purposes to certain Christians, we see that, after all, it may be possible that there were Apostolic practices and original teachings or generally known principles, which did not happen to be referred to in an occasional correspondence. And when we take the evidently true position, that the function of the Bible is, not to transmit the Gospel, but as a norm to regulate its transmission by the Church, because composed of written utterances of the Church's founders, together with ancient documents which they endorse as sacred and inspired, then we are not wholly dependent upon the letter of its contents.

This is the position taken by the German and the English Reformations, as distinct from the Calvinistic; which latter, not indeed in practice, yet in theory, confines Christianity to Bible limitations. The former is not only clearly the true one, but it is alone the position that can meet many objectors, and spare us many difficulties in our defense of essential Christianity. For when we consider that the Bible is not Christ, and belief in the Bible is not identical with belief in Christ, we need not feel anxious as to assaults upon His faith that are only based upon criticism of its pages. We can say to the ordinary assailant, Why do you attack our handbook? What has that to do with our faith? There are plenty of Christians who know nothing of it, in

other lands and in our own, whose faith in the Gospel rests on another basis. Now deal with that faith. We give you all you ask, for the sake of argument, and tell you that we believe in the Gospel because it reaches us through the preaching, the sacraments, the institutions, the life, the services, the creeds of the Church; a continuous stream of holy life; the tradition passed on through the centuries from saint to saint, and minister to minister. What have you to say to that? Your task has only begun, you have done nothing, until you give us reasons for not believing in this Gospel which thus reaches us. Destroy that Book if you will and can, but still tell us why we should not rest upon this Christ, whose story, and whose Good News, is no more dependent upon it than the story of a Washington is dependent upon some biography of him. We prize that Volume, we will defend it, but your disbelief in its alleged character, or your assaults on it, do not touch the faith in Christ which began before it existed, and has blessed many without it ever since.

And so we see the value of that divinely given Book, as we hold it. It preserves in undimmed clearness the picture of that Christ who lives in the Church, who is its foundation and its theme. It preserves, in changeless form, utterances of inspired men who gave to the Church the story of its Lord, the explanation of His work, the prophecies of its future, the assurances of His

triumph, and the hope of a glorious immortality for His people. Therefore it is precious beyond all other books conceivable. It is the standard, the criterion by which the Church is ever to try its fidelity to its mission. It is the test which detects adulteration in the food man feeds on. Or, rather, it is the compass which detects and corrects the deviations of the ship, the ark of the Church, in which we voyage towards our rest; that without which men in their ignorance might and would be borne far astray ere they reached the goal of their voyage. It is the book that alone can keep true the melody of that message which the people of God are to proclaim in this world, — the handbook on earth for those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. This is well expressed in the ancient seal of Harvard. Across an open Bible is written the word "Veritas." To the credit of the founders of that honored institution, this ever reminds its members that, amid all activity of thought and all progress of learning, however sound, the only truth that is free from liability to human error, unmixed with the results of human limitations, is that regarding Jesus Christ, the Truth Incarnate, which is found in that Volume where we have it in the written words of Apostolic men.

One evening, as I walked to my hotel after one of my Sicilian Vespers, I tarried awhile in the moonlight by the fountain of Arethusa. It

welled up murmuringly under the waving palms, surrounded by the tufted papyri that tell of the sojourn of the Saracen in this often conquered and reconquered island.

When the Greek colonists first came to settle here, back in the dawn of history, they made their home about this crystal spring. But as it rises on a little island, separate from the mainland of Sicily, the present though not the ancient limits of the town of Syracuse, they wondered whence could come this fresh and limpid water, about which the salt waves beat so close at hand. In their love of home, and in their fondness for poetic fancy, these colonists dwelt upon the mystery, until it came to be believed that this fountain had flowed beneath the sea from distant Hellas, and that in it they drank of water fed by the rains and dews of Elis, that home whence the fathers had come forth, and where Grecian life was truer, purer than ever it could be elsewhere, though fair were the skies and rich the fields of Sicily.

And so, it seemed to me, is it with these Scriptures of which we had been speaking, and which my friend had welcomed. As the Church wanders on through the ages, and spreads through distant lands, ever more remote from its birthplace, its members, however favored their abodes or great their progress, wish to keep in touch with the days and the life of its origin, ever be nurtured by the dews of its birth. They know

that there is the ideal of Christian living and thinking, which, though simpler than their own may be, must yet never be departed from, in the changes that time may bring, or the larger light that experience and thought may give. This ideal is preserved in the Bible, which, like that mysterious fountain, has come beneath the sea of time, unaffected by the billows of history, unchanged since it issued from the scenes of the home whence we came out. In it can we be refreshed by draughts that have the invigorating power of sources that rose on the mount where Apostles sojourned with the now unseen Lord. By it can the Church be kept from error in its task of reproducing, upon every shore and in every age, the spirit of the days of its youth.

Therefore nothing can take its place. Before it, all must bow in reverence. In conflict with it, no voice, no authority is valid. While we hear the Church, the commissioned preacher of the Everlasting Gospel, yet we must, like the Bereans of old, even in presence of its utterances, exercise our privilege to search the Scriptures to see whether those things are so.

Date Due

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01016 3832